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THE ALPS

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HERE AND THERE AMONG THE ALPS

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BY THE

HON. FREDERICA PLUNKET

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PREFACE.

SWITZERLAND, with its beautiful mountain scenery, is now so well known to the great majority of travellers, that an endeavour to give the charm of novelty to a description of its familiar views would be vain. In offering the following pages to the public, the authoress is actuated, not so much by the motive to describe her own especial excursions, as by the wish to persuade other ladies to depart more than is their usual habit from the ordinary routine of a Swiss summer tour; to urge them no longer to pause on the threshold of the Alpine world, but to pass its snow-marked boundaries, and to see and admire for themselves those wonders of nature which many of them are content to gaze on from a distance, thus losing half their beauty.

Should any of the readers of this book be induced by its perusal to extend their mountain walks, and thereby to increase the measure of their own enjoyment, the writer will have attained her object, and will feel pleasure in the thought that she has contributed, be it ever so slightly, towards their happiness.

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AMONG THE ALPS.

INTRODUCTION.

In these days of Alpine adventure, when so many of our countrymen, braving the dangers and hardships of the higher regions, ascend one mountain after another, till scarce a European peak remains untrodden by British feet, the literature of the Alps has attained a degree of importance unheard of, or unthought of some twenty years ago. Several of the foremost heroes in the great mountaineering army, returning from the scenes of their victories, exchange the ice-axe for the pen, and fighting their hard battles once again, carry us, who read their books, along with them in the thrilling interest of the narrative, till we almost feel as if we ourselves had done the daring deeds described; as if we too had scaled the Weisshorn's dangerous rocks, had forced our way up

the Rothhorn's threatening crags, had won the perilous heights of the Pointe des Écrins, or after long years of effort and disappointment, had stood at last conquerors on the Matterhorn's proud summit.

These sensational and highly exciting works have, however, one great disadvantage, they check the energies and chill the aspirations of moderate walkers. To ladies they are particularly discouraging. How are they to attempt the ascent of the *horns* or *dents*, or *pointes* or *spitzes* of which they read and hear, if they are beset with such dangers and difficulties? How are they to clamber up precipices, where at each step the treacherous rocks may break beneath their feet? How are they to walk on the knife-like edges of snow ridges, where a single false step would be destruction, or to descend the steep ice-slope, where a slip is fatal? They feel that to attempt such performances would be absolute madness, risking other lives as well as their own, and they lay aside the fascinating volume with a sigh, and regretfully confess that the high Alps are beyond their powers, and that they must content themselves with small expeditions, and mule paths at moderate elevations.

Now in coming to this decision, they are in some respects mistaken. It is quite true that the giants of the Alpine world are for the most part unattainable by them, and that with some bright, but rare exceptions, ladies have been unable to overcome the

difficulties of their ascent; but on a sort of border-land, between the forbidden ground of danger and the beaten paths of safety, there are to be found a host of fine glacier passes and high snow mountains, many of them affording scenery unsurpassed for beauty in the whole range of the Alps, and which, with proper care and precaution, can be visited with pleasure and profit by ladies, or walkers of ordinary capacity. All that is required to meet the comparatively slight difficulties of these excursions, is strength, health, the habit of taking exercise, and a perfectly steady head. Any lady possessing these qualifications, and taking with her always one, and in some cases two first-rate guides, may make an endless number of delightful tours among the high Alps, without risk to herself or her companions, and without causing any anxiety to her friends.

There is a great deal said unjustly about the dangers of mountaineering; they are small compared to those of hunting, steeple-chasing, boating, or bathing, and infinitesimal in comparison of the perils incurred in these days, during a journey by express train on an English railway. No doubt some accidents are recorded each year, but it will always be seen, that the largest proportion of them do not happen to alpine climbers, accompanied by good guides, but rather to ladies and inexperienced gentlemen, or boys, who wander by themselves on mountains, of which they know nothing, and lose

their way, or miss their footing, in places where, with a guide, they would run no risk whatever.

My object in writing this book, which contains no narratives of hair-breadth escapes, or startling adventures, is to show what can be done easily by ladies of active habits, whose love for mountain scenery produces a sufficiently strong motive to make them brave the undeniable fatigues and privations which they will have to undergo. In giving a short account of the manner in which my sister and I spent the summer of 1874, I have not selected a particularly favorable year as an example; on the contrary, owing to the exceptional badness of the weather, and the fact of our being, most of the time, in places new to us, with whose best excursions we were sometimes unacquainted, we accomplished less during this season than on former occasions, and, as will be seen, our failures and disappointments often outnumbered our successes. Yet in spite of these misfortunes, on looking back now to our summer tour, it seems as if all its little worries and vexations had faded into oblivion, whilst its joys and pleasures have remained behind.

During the dark winter months which are now approaching, should any lady, as she reclines in an armchair by her bright fire side, while away a few hours in the perusal of this book, and excited by our example, determine that she too, when the time comes, will leave the beaten tracks, and adventure

herself into the ice-world beyond, the best wish I can form for her is, that she may be as happy in the days of her wanderings as we have been in ours, and that the memory of them may smile back on her as pleasantly from the past as it now does on us.

Chapter I.

THE ALPS AND THEIR VISITORS.

Whatever may be the diversities of aim of those travellers who yearly swarm from England to the region of the Alps, their starting-point and the commencement of their course must at least be alike. As all the various races of mankind began their pilgrimage originally in the persons of their common ancestors, from the Garden of Eden, so do all the component parts of that heterogeneous mass, named collectively 'the British tourist,' begin their journey from one centre, the railway platform. There, hurrying to and fro, laden with bags of every size and shape, with sticks, umbrellas, parasols, railway rugs, brandy flasks, sandwiches, Murrays, Bradshaws, newspapers, shilling novels, and no end of other things, they finally subside, after a good deal of agitation, into their respective places, and are whirled off, by the noisiest of engines, to Folkestone

or Dover. Between the English and French ports the same trials await them all, and they suffer more or less, as the steamer dances gaily over the brisk waves of that channel which forms our southern frontier. At Calais the mighty stream divides, part flowing by Brussels and the Rhine, and part by Paris and France, till it unites again at Basle or Neuchatel, on the threshold of Switzerland.

Here all uniformity ceases, and as the human race has developed, since the days of Adam, into types differing widely in form and intellect, so the tourist, no longer a mere unit in the great mass, assumes his own shape and individuality, and the extremes that for two days have been almost touching, start far apart, and perhaps meet no more during their course.

Look at yonder young man, strong of muscle, lithe of limb, with a face still pale from the London air, and the stuffy atmosphere in some little court of the Temple; in six weeks you would not know him again. Hardy, healthy, weather-beaten, with throat and hands scarlet, and nose bereft of skin, he will have stormed many of those mighty fortresses of nature, whose glacis are the ice-slope, whose moats are the *Bergschrund*, and from whose giant battlements the avalanche is hurled. He will have been perished in the morning frost, baked in the mid-day sun, and drenched in the mountain shower; he will have lost his sleep by night and his rest by day, and yet strange to say he will have laid in a stock of

health, strength, and happiness, the effects of which he will still feel next winter, through the densest of London fogs.

Turn from him to an ordinary cheerful-looking man beside him; his clothes seem quite new, and he carries a courier's bag of enormous dimensions strapped around him. His face is red to begin with, and it will not get much worse; he will proceed at once to Interlaken, where he will purchase an alpenstock of very white wood, rather taller than himself, and neatly finished at the top with a black chamois horn; an ornamental object, but of little or no use. Furnished with this weapon he will drive up to Grindelwald and eat a good dinner, after which he will visit the ice cave of the upper glacier. Next day he will ride up to the Wengern Alp, and perhaps walk down to Lauterbrunnen, taking care to have these performances duly registered on the tall stick. In this manner he will proceed, 'doing the Alps,' in a mild way, and at the end of his short holiday will return to his business in the city a healthier, happier, and perhaps also, a better man for this little respite from his daily toil; this breathing time, in which he has, as it were, stood still in the great race after wealth, and forgotten for a moment, amidst the solitudes of the mountains, his hard service of that golden idol which is still set up on many a plain.

Not far from him stand three ladies, a mother

and two daughters; the girls are pretty and young, but they look pale and jaded; they too have been working hard, but in a different way; they have gone through a London season. They have been at it, literally, morning, noon, and night; they have spent hours in the 'Row,' they have spent sums in the shops, they have driven miles in the streets; they have left cards in hundreds, and written notes in scores; they have drank innumerable cups of tea with innumerable friends, and they have been to dinners, theatres, operas, concerts, crushes, dances, and balls, all through the sultry summer nights. They must have rest at last, so they have come to Switzerland to breathe the pure air, and to recruit their strength. They are in the prettiest and most fashionable of travelling costumes; they have a vast pile of luggage, if you could only see it, in a neighbouring van, and a courier and lady's maid attend upon them.

These ladies will probably go direct to Lucerne, and thence by boat and railway to the Rigi Kaltbad, where they expect to meet some friends, with whom they will stroll about and sit out of doors, and the fresh, bracing air will no doubt do them good. They do not think much about scenery, and care a great deal more for their own appearance than for that of the Alps. On the whole, they prefer a pretty pink and white dress to a pink and white mountain, and do not let the sunset interfere with their dinner;

but they wish to see some of the sights, so they make a large party to the Kulm, from whence, after an almost sleepless night, they sally forth at early dawn to see the morning sun. That luminary, to all appearances, does not rise at all on the occasion. However, in spite of this omission, they have rather enjoyed the expedition; they have laughed a great deal, and have gained a real appetite for their breakfast. The spirit of the mountains has breathed upon them, be it ever so slightly, so let us hope that they, too, will be the better for their Swiss tour, and go home in the autumn with strengthened constitutions and improved complexions to their native land.

Time and space alike would fail even to name the varieties of the mountain tourist; they are as numerous almost as the alpine flowers that deck his path. Take, for instance, any well-known mule pass of the Oberland, and a student of human nature might there in the course of a long summer day make a collection as curious in kind, and almost as great in quantity, though inferior in beauty, to that which the botanist could produce after his morning ramble. So let each human specimen go his own way, and enjoy himself as his disposition and his education have fitted him to do. The mountains have room for all, and if, as is but just, they reserve their choicest beauties and most glorious effects for the bold climber, who loves them best, and toils most patiently to reach their snowy brows, yet even on

the indolent admirer, content to lie at their feet, they can bestow a vision of loveliness that will rise again and again to his memory long after their forms have faded from his sight.

These individuals should, however, while pursuing their own course, not murmur at others for doing the same. There is a great deal of intolerance displayed yearly in Switzerland by the various classes of tourists who visit it, and who, with different physical powers and different ideas of enjoyment, spend their time in a curiously contrasting manner. The active and energetic portion, who like to soar above the common herd, look down sometimes from the eminences to which they attain with supreme contempt on their neighbours below, while these latter, taking the world easy in a *chaise à porteur*, or on the back of a mule, smile in a superior way at the folly of the climbers, and talking about what they have little experience of, say that nothing is gained by all the trouble taken and the risks incurred. They mutually jar upon and irritate one another, whereas if they would only reflect a moment, they are all right in their several paths, each playing out his little summer game in the way which most conduces to his happiness.

Now among all this vast multitude, my sister and I hold, as I have already mentioned, a sort of middle position. To the deeds of the adventurous few we have no hopes of attaining; their feats as much

surpass ours, as did those of Hercules, the doings of the ordinary mortals of his day, and we should as soon think now of attempting to scale the Matterhorn as we should have thought then of trying to strangle the lion of Nemea. Those stupendous peaks that they have reached are to us forbidden ground; we may look up to them admiringly, longingly perhaps, but on their dizzy heights our feet can never stand; they are, like so many of the high places of this world, the reward and the privilege of those who excel, and mediocrity cannot obtain them. But because the foremost ranks are unattainable, it is no reason that one should not try for the second, and we, or any other ladies who choose to make the effort, may leave the great mass of idlers in the hollow behind us, and rising above the hot mule paths, may take to the snow and ice, and with the fresh glacier wind blowing cool on our faces, we may mount with alacrity as high as our limited powers will permit us.

Of course for those who aspire at all above the beaten tracks, it will not do to start very early in the year; the spring snows must melt, and the spring avalanches must fall before it is safe to venture too near them, and having reached Switzerland rather sooner than usual in the summer of 1874, we determined to take up our abode for a short time at Thun, and there await the beginning of July.

It is rather tantalizing to be so near the mountains,

and still out of reach of them; to see their well-known forms rising in sharp crests above the vapoury clouds, or glowing in the evening sun, and then to return to the garden of one's hotel, feeling that the enchanted ground from which they rise is no nearer than it was yesterday; still to those who have to wait, Thun with its picturesque site, its comfortable hotels, its pretty shaded walks, and its lovely views, is as pleasant a stopping place as could be selected, and there we passed our time agreeably enough through the last weeks of June.

At last the longed-for moment arrived. Away, from trim gardens and neat gravelled paths, from the heated atmosphere and the relaxing air. Away, by the steamer up the beautiful lake of Thun, enclosed within its ramparts of pine-clad mountains, above which on the southern side rise the stately peaks of the great Oberland range. Away! past Interlaken, hot and dusty, with its rows of fashionable hotels, and its bewildering number of carved wood shops. Away! up the shady valley of the Lütschinen, while the horses' bells make merry music as they jog quietly along, and we spend our time partly agreeably in admiring the beauty of the views, and partly unpleasantly in trying to ward off the attacks of an invading army of horse-flies, which beset the carriage on every side. At length Grindelwald is reached, that pretty little village that everyone knows so well, nestling quiet and secure between the

stern precipices of the Eiger and the Wetterhorn, and there, while inhaling the cool mountain breezes, that blow down pure and fresh from the great adjacent *Eismeer*, we waited for a few days to gain strength and energy after the enervating heat of the plains. There also we were joined by our guide, Maurus Amrhein, of Engelberg, who for four successive years has been our constant attendant during our tours in Switzerland, and who combines the strength, activity, and experience of a good mountaineer with the carefulness and steadiness required in a guide for ladies.

Chapter II.

THE METTENBERG AND THE TSCHINGEL PASS.

Among the many minor expeditions from that great centre of Alpine adventure, Grindelwald, perhaps the one least often attempted is the ascent of the Mettenberg, that mighty buttress that terminates the ridge above which towers the pinnacle of the Schreckhorn.

To any lady accustomed to mountain walking, and accompanied by a good guide, the ascent presents no great difficulty, and the fatigue which must inevitably be incurred is amply repaid by the beauty of the view. From about half way up the mountain the eye plunges down into the very heart of that great *Eismeer*, of which from Grindelwald nothing but a diminutive stream can be seen, while the rival passes of the Mönch and the Strahleck flank the view on either side, two mighty highways of the Alps, trodden only by the comparative few, the possessors of strength,

fleetness, and endurance. Dwarfing even these eminences by their superior height, rise the three giant rocks of the range, the Eiger, compact, solid, strong, the Finsteraarhorn, slender and spire-like, and the Schreckhorn, dark and frowning. There is a cruel look about this latter peak, and as one gazes at its forbidding precipices, the thought involuntarily sinks to a lowly grave in the churchyard of Grindelwald that few passers-by omit to visit.

To return to ourselves, I may remark that experience must be bought on the Alps as well as elsewhere, and our purchase on this occasion I now offer to my reader. As the climb from the glacier to the top of the Mettenberg is continuously steep and must take some time, no one should on any account start for this excursion except in settled weather. Though it was early in the morning when we left Grindelwald, light clouds already floated in the sky, and as the sun gained in strength they gained unpleasantly in size; however, being in for it, we tried not to heed them, and toiled patiently through the oppressive heat of the morning till we reached the ridge, distant about one hour from the summit.

Our view at first had been confined to one side, that which I have endeavoured to describe, but once on the ridge, we were to have the advantage of seeing down on Grindelwald and the valleys beyond. We had looked forward with pleasure to this prospect, but alas! when it came, the pleasure was of too

mixed a kind to be real. As we were high above the Faulhorn range we could see the lake of Thun and the plain beyond, but the view was not encouraging; we beheld a dull leaden sky, on which the descending rain showed itself in long inky streaks, while nearer ominous looking thunderclouds rolled slowly but surely up the mountain. Only one hour from the top and to turn back! We glanced up at the summit and it seemed invitingly near, we turned our eyes down to the storm and it was rapidly gaining on us; we considered, we consulted with our guides, we hesitated, and finally practising that virtue which is said to be the better part of valour, we turned and fled.

A bad thunderstorm is by no means an insignificant enemy to encounter on the top of a mountain, and we tried to console ourselves with the thought that we might have incurred real danger had we proceeded; yet none but the defeated Alpine climber can know how sadly the steps are retraced down the hard fought ground, won all in vain, and we returned in the afternoon to the Adler Hotel wet, dejected, and crest-fallen, a living example of the neglect of that precept which I am trying to inculcate, namely, not to attempt a mountain in doubtful weather.

Depression of spirits, except on determined wet days, does not fortunately last long in the bracing mountain air, and with little or no trace of our recent disappointment we drove down three days

later, on a bright sunny morning, to Lauterbrunnen, from whence we proceeded in the afternoon, part of the way in a carriage, and the latter half on foot, to the primitive but not uncomfortable little inn at Trachsel-Lauinen, near the head of the Lauterbrunnen valley, our object being to go next day across the Tschingel pass to Kandersteg. In addition to our own guide we had taken with us the well-known Peter Egger, of Grindelwald. Everyone who has been in Switzerland during the summer of 1874 will remember the extreme uncertainty of the weather during all the month of July, of which scarcely a day passed without more or less heavy rain. Though our walk on that evening was very short, we could not accomplish it without a wetting, and by the time we entered the inn we were rather like miniatures of the Lauterbrunnen valley itself, with little waterfalls running down on all sides.

As it is impossible to take any weight of luggage over the pass, we had sent the bulk of ours round by *diligence*, and had only with us such things as were absolutely necessary for the night. To change our dresses was therefore out of the question, and there seemed at first but two courses open to us, both equally unpleasant, either to remain wet as we were all the evening, or to take off our dripping garments, and having none with which to replace them, to go supperless to bed. From the horns of this dilemma Amrhein relieved us by suggesting a fire in the *salle*

at which we should dry ourselves while the supper was preparing. This was decidedly the preferable course of the three, and we adopted it, but it is not a pleasant performance to stand on a sultry summer evening slowly turning round before a blazing fire, while the damp rises in clouds of steam all about, and envelopes one in a vapoury atmosphere like that which geologists attribute to our earth during one of the great pre-Adamite periods. Let any who doubt the truth of this statement just try the experiment for themselves.

Next day we started at early dawn; the morning was hot and cloudy, and looked unpromising, but by sunrise matters improved, and we had, on the whole, a fine day for this very agreeable expedition. The slopes and rocks of the Tschingel Tritt are very steep, but with help from efficient guides they are made easily passable, even to ladies, unless these latter should be inclined to giddiness, in which case they had better keep to the mule paths, and avoid as a rule all glacier passes.

When the top of the rocks is attained there is a rather tedious piece of moraine that must be crossed before the snow is reached, part of which is like the high-pitched roof of a Gothic church, on whose sharp edge the way lies, and which, judging by the top, would be a building of considerable size, as it took us at least a quarter of an hour to walk from the west end to the chancel. However, being unused to

roofs, we probably went slowly, and should have been even longer but for the confidence which the firm hold of a guide's hand always affords.

Here I must divert a little from my subject to say a few words about Swiss guides. So much has been written in their praise by those who know them best that it seems almost superfluous to add to the commendations they have already received; yet, on the high Alps, a lady is so completely dependent, both for security and comfort, upon the services of her guide, that it would be ungrateful not to acknowledge their value. In fact, in difficult places, most ladies could do little or nothing if left to themselves. They have neither the muscular strength, the activity, nor the training required to make a good climber, and the most they can aspire to do is to be able to follow implicitly and fearlessly the directions they receive, and trust for their safety to the strong arm and unwearied attention of the hardy mountaineer who walks before or beside them, and who, while giving them the best place on the narrow ledge or steep slope, will yet, on his apparently insecure footing, be firm as a rock should they make a false step or need his support.

But it is not only in places of difficulty that their good qualities are so evident; they are untiring in their efforts and inexhaustible in their resources to smooth away all discomforts and make things go pleasantly. They can convert an unpromising look-

ing rock or part of a field of snow into a snug little camping ground, on which to partake of the mid-day meal. They never look tired of the mountains or passes, over which they have toiled so often, but join cheerfully in admiring their beauties, and with ladies their good temper and patience are admirable with what must seem to them the extreme of awkwardness and incapacity. Many of them are men of rough exterior, and yet, perhaps from having mixed so much with their superiors in station, they have acquired a certain refinement of manner which guards them from ever offending, and which, through all the intimacy and friendly feeling that often exists between the guide and his employer, keeps them always quiet and respectful. Of course, among so large a body of men, there may and must be some exceptions to this rule, but I only speak of our own experience, which has been almost always favourable.

Once on the glacier, easy snow slopes are crossed to the summit of the col, from whence the Jungfrau is seen, rising magnificently a sheer height of more than 10,000 feet above the valley of Lauterbrunnen. Of course, on arriving there we celebrated the feat by observing the time-honoured Alpine custom of eating. There is something very pleasant in these little meals, taken often under difficulties on the top of a mountain or a col; the surroundings are usually so beautiful, the air is so fresh and invigorating, the silence, the freedom, the solitude of the great moun-

tain regions have such a soothing effect on the mind, which reposes from the every-day cares and anxieties of the world below, while the body finds the longed-for rest after its hard labour.

Taken separately, the component parts of our luncheon would not sound inviting. A rather hard knapsack for a seat, snow for a footstool, and for food some very dry bread and an antiquated chicken, a good deal burned, whose limbs had to be torn asunder by main force, and whose flesh was about of the consistency of Swiss carved wood. These delicacies were washed down with some wine and snow, and the meal was complete; but the sauce which accompanied it, giving relish to the whole, was not prepared by human hands, is indescribable, and can only be tasted and enjoyed by those who have earned it with a hard morning's work on the upper Alps.

Rested and strengthened, we rose and pursued our course, descending continuously in succession, over snow, ice, moraine, rubbish, and finally grass, till we reached the head of the beautiful Gastern Thal, from whence a smooth and easy path should have led us down to Kandersteg. Not so, however, for the mountain torrents, swollen by heavy rain, had made sad havoc of that secluded valley. In some places the path was completely buried in mud and stones, in others the encroaching waters had swept it away; of one bridge not a trace remained, and we had to

cross the rapid stream by the simple but uncomfortable process of walking through it. At last, after a rather unpleasant scramble down the side of the Kander waterfall, where the road had fallen in, leaving nothing in particular to go upon, we reached the Hotel de l'Ours, at the foot of the Gemmi, a little tired, quite wet, covered with mud, but still very happy, having enjoyed our pass extremely.

As we had been to Kandersteg before, and visited the beautiful lake of Oeschinen, we had planned on this occasion going to Schwarenbach on the Gemmi, and from thence making some excursions; but the very watery appearance of the clouds deterred us, and fearing that we might, perhaps, be detained by bad weather for some days in that not very luxurious little inn, we turned our backs with regret on the Kander Thal, and driving down to Spiez, on the lake of Thun, took the steamer to Interlaken, whence next morning we proceeded to Meiringen, where we spent a Sunday.

That little village is a sort of reservoir, into which in July and August, three or four popular passes daily pour a torrent of tourists. These people are generally much delighted with what they have seen and done, and wish to recount their own experiences, and to hear those of their neighbours. In consequence, at table d'hôte, there is often a deafening buzz of conversation, and to anyone sitting quiet and rather silent at dinner, the confusion of sentences that the

ear catches here and there, and cannot connect in their proper order, is most bewildering, and reminds one of the game called 'cross questions and crooked answers,' that most of us have played in our childhood. Here is a small specimen.

'Have you been staying at Lucerne?'

'No, the top of it was covered with clouds.'

'Was there much snow on the Grimsel?'

'Yes, indeed; it had good springs, and was most comfortable.'

'We were on the Rosenlaui glacier to-day. Were you?'

'Yes, we rode up to the top and walked down.'

'Did you sleep at the Grimsel?'

'Oh! we have just come from it, by the Brunig.'

'I hope you got a good carriage for the pass?'

'There were a good many patches of snow on it, here and there.'

'Is this your first visit to Switzerland?'

'We were on it for about an hour, I think. It was so slippery!'

'What did you think of the Handeck waterfall?'

'If it would only be dry on Monday! even for one day!'

'How I do hope the weather will clear up! What a week we have had!'

'Oh! I admired it so much! The mass of falling water was quite magnificent.'

Add to this *pot-pourri* a volley of German superlatives, 'Ach! das war prächtig!' 'Sonderbar!' 'Ganz abscheulich!' 'Wunderschön!' 'Schrecklich steil!' 'Wundervoll!' Then a great clatter of knives and forks, rattling of plates, drawing of corks, running to and fro of waiters, a blaze of light, and not an open window, or a breath of fresh air.

Is it any wonder that after enduring this Babel of tongues and sounds for an hour-and-a-half you return to your room stupified and exhausted, requiring a long period of rest and quiet to restore the nerves?

Chapter III.

THE ENGSTLEN ALP AND THE TITLIS.

On Monday morning we started afresh, and walked up the Engelberg Joch to the little inn which stands about an hour below the top of the pass. The situation of this house is very picturesque, close to the Engstlen lake, in whose clear waters the snowy range of the Titlis is reproduced with almost the distinctness of the original. The attractions of the place are, however, all out-of-doors, and in cloudy weather the tourist cannot console himself with creature comforts for the absence of those beauties of Nature, which he has come to enjoy. The house is clean but rough, and it requires all the effect of sharp mountain air on the appetite to make the food palatable.

The owner keeps a large dairy farm, and the animals belonging to it seem to live on terms of perfect equality and fraternity with the visitors. The cows walk about where they please; the goats

lie on a bench at the hall door, and walk upstairs to the bedroom floor with as much composure as if they were '*en pension*,' and paid their six or eight francs a day; while in this Republic the pigs carry their liberty to an excess verging on communism, and indulge in conduct with regard to their neighbour's goods which no right-minded beast would dream of. During the table d'hôte a great commotion arose at the far end of the room, of which we could not at first discern the cause. Various exclamations of dismay, astonishment, and indignation were heard, a simultaneous rush was made to the window, and presently the object of all this excitement was drawn in through it to the room; the wretched remains of a Scotch plaid, completely torn to pieces and partly eaten away. The lady to whom it belonged had unguardedly left it on a bench outside the house, and the pigs had forthwith appropriated it. An appeal was made against this injustice to the mistress of the hotel, but she seemed neither much surprised nor concerned at the outrage, merely observing that such things often happened, and that she had at times been herself a sufferer. Apparently it never occurred to her that some mild restraint might with advantage be exercised on the offenders.

Our object in going on this occasion to the Engstlen Alp was to make it our starting-point for the ascent of the Titlis. This mountain, though only

between 10,000 and 11,000 feet in height, is at all times so covered with snow that it is necessary to begin the ascent before daylight, in order, if possible, to descend from the glacier before the heat of the sun has made the snow unpleasantly soft.

These early starts have, among other disadvantages, the very serious objection that, except in quite settled weather, it is not easy to foresee so long before sunrise how the day is likely to turn out. The white clouds, which often lie at night in straight lines along the summits of the mountains, may either melt away with the sun's first rays or gather with the increasing heat into blackness and rain, and it requires a certain amount of moral courage to come to a decision as to whether one will start and run the risk of failure, or stay at home and perhaps lose a fine day; in short, to take a leap literally in the dark, and to bear the consequences. On this occasion we were not successful in our choice. The night was foggy, but at intervals the mists passed away, and a space of clear sky, looking all the clearer for the contrast, gave promise of better weather.

Trusting to these delusive hopes, we foolishly left our beds at an hour when all rational people should be in their first sleep, and at 3 A.M., armed with a lantern, we bent our uncertain steps towards the top of the col. It seemed as if the sky had intended to play a practical joke upon us; no sooner were we quite gone, and the hotel door closed against us,

than the clear spaces overhead that we had fondly trusted in began to contract everywhere; great columns of mist rolled up from behind us, and big clouds came swiftly down to meet us. For a short time a few stars twinkled facetiously at us, as if enjoying our discomfiture, but by degrees they faded away, and a thick, dull fog descended and enveloped us all round, as we floundered helplessly through the wet grass and muddy path leading to the col.

Once there, we stopped to hold a consultation. The Titlis was out of the question. Our view from where we stood was limited, to say the best of it. We could just see ourselves, but nothing further, and our faces, as they appeared indistinctly through the white mist, had the foolish expression appertaining to people who know they have done a stupid thing and are suffering for it. We could not bear to retrace our steps, so we decided to push on to Engelberg, and after some groping here and there in the fog we finally arrived at that village, having seen nothing whatever of the pass we had made.

Two or three wet days followed in succession, and at last the sun came out again, an unwonted and welcome sight to eyes that had been gazing incessantly at clouds and raindrops for so long. Nothing daunted by our late failure, we prepared for another attack on the Titlis.

This time we started in the afternoon, and made for the Trübsee, a little lake fed by glacier streams,

and situated on a sort of table land, above that first part of the Joch, whose steep, zigzagged path is well known at Engelberg by the name of the Pfaffenwand. Close to the Trübsee a small inn has lately been opened by an enterprising man from Alpnach, who also keeps one of the hotels on the Pilatus. It takes about two hours to reach this abode, at which we did not arrive till late in the evening. Many people, tempted like ourselves by the beauty of the day, were preparing to go up the mountain, and the little inn was full of travellers and guides. We were fortunate in securing a room to ourselves, and the supper provided us was, considering all the circumstances, creditable to the establishment.

People talk of sleeping at these places on the mountain side, but that is generally a mere figure of speech. I have stopped at a great many of them, and never remember to have had a good night. First there is supper, which always takes a long time to prepare; when that is procured and eaten, there are generally various omissions in the bedroom which have to be rectified; no water in the jugs, or the door cannot be locked, or the window will not shut. It is necessary to find a housemaid, or failing such a personage, a woman of some sort belonging to the house; but there is no bell, and you grope rather nervously down queer stairs like a ladder, into a dark, waste place below, probably full of all kinds of lumber. Here you get completely

out of your reckoning, and do not know where to turn next. A little way off light gleams through the chinks of a door, and you feel sure that beyond it is the kitchen, but sounds of men's voices and fumes of tobacco proceed also from it, and you know that all the guides are smoking there, and having their supper. It will not do to intrude yourself upon these men, and you turn back in despair, when out of a dark corner, from which you least expected her, a woman suddenly emerges; you pounce upon her, and after a great expenditure of bad German, and worse patois, you make your wishes known, and she comprehends them. Then comes the final arrangement with your guide as to the exact hour at which you are to start next morning, and generally a lengthened discussion on the chances for or against a fine day.

At last everything is completed, and you subside into the rough but clean bed prepared for you, and think you are going to sleep. Not so! A man in the room over you begins walking up and down in heavy nailed boots, with no apparent object but that of making a noise, and you wonder why, for his own comfort even, he does not put on slippers. In time he is at rest, but two cheerful gentlemen have remained in the *salle*, which is under you, and are making merry over the remains of their supper, and when everyone else is quiet they come up to their rooms singing. Fortunately they are not near you,

so you hear no more of them, but as the silence of the night deepens, solemn sounds arise in measured cadence from the room beside you, and you become aware that your next door neighbour is enjoying that balmy sleep which is as yet denied to you.

Rendered wakeful by all these disturbances you begin to reflect, and it occurs to you that your guide looked uneasy about the weather as he left your room. You wonder what it is doing now. Better get up and see. A great deal of scraping and crackling ensues, followed by an abominable smell, and, after many failures, you have performed the clever feat of lighting a Swiss match. You look at your watch, it is almost 12 o'clock. You look out of your window; you see the clear dark vault of heaven, spangled with innumerable stars, and you return to your bed tired, it is true, but cheerful, and at last drop off into a quiet sleep, from which you are awakened, it seems to you, immediately, by a knock at the door, and your guide's voice gives you the unpleasing information that it is 2 o'clock, and time to get up.

It is strange, that after a night spent something in this fashion, one should rise next morning fresh and ready for work, but so I have generally found it; probably a certain degree of excitement, caused by the anticipated expedition, gives for the moment that strength which should be produced by rest and sleep. It would, however, be a wasting process if

repeated too often, and a night of this kind should always be followed by one of undisturbed repose.

By 3 A.M. most of the aspirants to the Titlis were ready for action, and a funny procession issued at intervals from the little hotel, each party led by a guide, carrying a lighted lantern. Seen very indistinctly through the gloom of the night these dark moving masses, with their luminous heads, might have been taken for gigantic glowworms, crawling slowly up the mountain side.

It is undeniable, even by the most ardent lover of the Alps, that to walk up a mountain path by the light of a lantern is a most unpleasant proceeding. To those who have never tried it it may not sound so bad. They think of the steady light afforded by a city lamp, or a well regulated carriage-lamp, but they have little idea of the eccentric behaviour of an Alpine lantern, bobbing about excitedly in the guide's hands as he walks rapidly forward over the rough ground; now throwing an unnatural glare over one part of the path, while it leaves the remainder in deepest shade; now dazzling the eyes, so that it hides every other object, and seems to be moving along on its own account; the next minute casting back the shadow of the guide, who holds it, with startling suddenness under one's feet. By its treacherous light round objects appear hollow, while flat spaces seem raised, and its deluded followers either lift their feet with care and effort over what

turns out to be only a small hole; or walking securely on a seeming shadow, become aware of its substance by coming into forcible contact with its sharp edges. Among the many watchers who long for the dawn, none welcome its first ray more gladly than those who have been misled by this 'Will of the Wisp' through many a waste and quagmire.

When it was light enough to see, we found ourselves on a rough mountain path, ascending through stones and grass, and in due time we arrived at a rock called the 'Stand,' where it is the invariable custom to have a first breakfast. Of course we did like our neighbours and predecessors, and while we were employed eating bread and eggs the sun rose, and the weather-wise as they watched it shook their heads. It portended evil, but the sight was very beautiful, as the eastern sky became pale red, and some heavy bands of clouds that had lain cold and dark along the horizon, glowed suddenly at the first touch of the magic rays into the richest purple. When this great display was concluded we rose and pursued our way, first over slopes of *débris*, and then over easy rocks, till we reached the glacier. In seasons when there is little snow this latter is said to be troublesome, but we did not find it at all so, and reached the summit without having required any step-cutting.

Here by degrees a large party assembled; including the guides there must have been at one time

nearly twenty individuals sitting about in the snow, some intent upon the distant prospect, while others were apparently more taken up with the provisions in the foregound. On a perfectly clear day the view from the Titlis is said to be very extended. We were not fortunate in this respect, as the horizon was laden with clouds, but the view we did get, though not just what we should have chosen, was still very grand and strange.

There was a high wind blowing, and the light mists, driven to and fro by its power, kept up a never ending variety of effects, most curious to watch. At one minute they had blotted out everything from the sight; at the next, opening unexpectedly, they showed one of the great Oberland mountains, apparently quite close, looking solid and massive in its light vapoury frame; while we admired it, it was gone, and no trace of its presence left, and almost immediately another scene was presented, the green Engstlen Alp and its quiet little lake lay clear and distinct at our feet; a moment more and they had disappeared in their turn. A great space then became visible, and we began slowly to identify the various peaks revealed, but before we had half got through their number the scene had changed again, and both vexed and pleased, we turned to watch for the next picture produced in this series of dissolving views.

It will not do to remain long stationary in the

snow, at an altitude of above 10,000 feet, while a strong, cold wind prevails around, and we were soon forced to turn reluctantly away, and get down as fast as we could, to comparative warmth and shelter. Of course the snow was soft, and of course we sank in it at nearly every step; that seems to be the usual routine during the descent of a mountain; we also had some narrow escapes of getting into crevasses, of which there appear to be no lack on the Titlis.

It is a queer sensation—the escape of a crevasse I mean; I have never been actually into one. You are going along quite composedly on the snow, when suddenly you sink in much deeper than usual, and you find, to your surprise, that you have nothing under one foot; instinctively you dig in your stick, hoping that it will touch something solid, but no, it also rests upon air, and then you become aware that you are on a snow bridge, and that if it should give way you will soon be hanging suspended by the rope over one of those gigantic cracks, that sometimes reach to the bottom of the glacier. Of course there is no danger if the rope is strong enough, but you would just as soon not put it to the test, and it is with a feeling of relief, that partly by your own, partly by your guide's exertions, you emerge from your awkward position, and return to what feels comparative *terra firma*.

By the time we reached Engelberg the weather had much disimproved, and those who in the morn-

ing had prophesied evil things, while they watched the rising sun, must have felt a certain grim satisfaction in seeing their words verified, as storms, winds, and rains burst in turns on that devoted village, till the rivers rose above their banks, and flooded all the fields in the flatter parts of the valley. We had intended leaving by the Surenen pass, and making some excursions in the Tödi district, but as our principal object this year was to visit for the first time the Engadine and some parts of Tirol, we feared to linger any longer, waiting for better weather, and decided to give up these expeditions, and push on at once by the high road and the railway direct to Coire.

It was not however without a certain regret that we turned our backs on the old ground, so well known, so often visited, where we had spent, during several successive summers, so many happy days, and prepared to wend our way to a new world, with whose mountains and glaciers we were unacquainted, and the very names of which sounded strange and unfamiliar to our ears. 'It is well to be off with the old love, before you are on with the new,' says a rather heartless little poem, or song—I forget which—but with all its fickleness human nature cannot always quite act up to that precept, and the memory of the old love will sometimes rise up again, and blot out the image of the new.

So we found, when we got among the eastern

Alps; they are very beautiful, very striking, and they had all the charm of novelty and variety to our eyes, but we could not 'be off' with their western rivals, and the comparisons which often rose to our minds were invariably in favour of the latter.

Chapter IV.

PIZ LANGUARD AND THE SURLEI FORCLA.

One would expect a drive from Engelberg to Lucerne to be about as uneventful a journey as could well be undertaken; but it is not always so, as we found by experience. Swollen by the constant rain into an unwonted degree of importance, the Engelberger Aa, usually a quiet, rational little river, had got on this occasion quite beside itself. Not content with roaring and dashing about in a frantic manner, within its appointed boundaries, it had broken through their limits, and once loose upon the world, had played no end of disagreeable pranks; entering corn-fields, and covering them with mud, tearing pieces off the roads, uprooting trees, carrying away bridges, and even invading dwellings, and turning the unfortunate owners out on the road side.

We saw one such houseless couple, carrying off their baby in its cradle, and a little of their portable

property, to seek shelter in the châlet of some more favoured neighbour, whom the inundation had spared. They looked sad, but patient; probably it was not the first time this misfortune had befallen them. Their house, we were told, would be most likely uninhabitable for some days, and when the subsiding waters should allow them to return, they would find the floors thickly covered with a deposit of black mud, and tenanted by beetles and other unsightly insects.

It is a hard life that the Swiss peasant leads, fighting inch by inch for his little bit of ground, against so many forces, almost all hostile to him; avalanches, land-slips, rolling stones, mountain torrents, winter storms, all in turn threaten his little property, and ruin sometimes in a few hours the produce of many days of patient toil. We tourists, who wander during the three best months of the year through the uplands of Switzerland, feasting our eyes with their endless beauties, and inhaling strength and health with every breath we draw, are apt to forget the reverse of the picture; when the blue skies are blurred and soiled with clouds, and the fierce blasts rage and howl through the mountain crags; when the soft tinkle of the cow-bells is heard no more, and the many coloured wild flowers are dead, and the pitiless snow comes down, and buries all that was once so green and gay, leaving but the leafless trees and the dark pines, that, black by contrast, look like sad pro-

cessions of mourners on the mountain side. We who have fled with the swallows to more genial climes, or returned to our comfortable English homes, do we ever think of the poor Swiss mountaineer, doomed for months to this almost arctic winter? Perhaps if we did, we should be more lenient to his faults, and grudge him less the silver and gold, which he certainly does at times extort from us gay birds of passage, who visit him in the sunshine, and desert him in the storm.

We felt ashamed to grumble at our small inconvenience in the presence of so much real misfortune, so we took all the delays and difficulties as quietly as we could, and waited three hours here, and half an hour there, and when our carriage could be got no further, we crossed torrents on planks, and walked through wet grass, and picked up odd conveyances, where we could find them, and finally, with great trouble and exertion, we reached Stanz in the evening, having been struggling since 6 o'clock A.M. to perform a distance of about sixteen miles.

Probably few English visitors to Engelberg have ever stopped at Stanz; it is a clean, thriving-looking little town, with certainly one, and I believe two, very comfortable inns. In the centre of the *place* stands the fine marble statue of Arnold von Winkelried, of which prints or photographs are usually to be seen in most of the hotels of that district.

The next morning we proceeded to Lucerne, and

thence to Coire, by that slowest of conveyances a Swiss railway. 'There is something very trying to the patience in being dragged along all day by one of the phlegmatic engines of that country; one longs to rouse them from their torpor, and send them, for once in a way, at a reasonable pace. If they would even keep going for some time at the jog-trot rate, which is their highest speed; but they have no sooner attained it than they begin to reduce their small amount of motion, and finally come to a stand at some little unknown station, at which no one gets in or out, and no business seems done. A long pause ensues, a bell is rung, a whistle is heard, then a horn is blown, and after this third demonstration, with a great deal of creaking, the lumbering machine is at length set agoing, and creeps along for a few miles, when the weary process begins again *da capo*. How one longs that an English express engine should catch hold of the whole concern, and whirl it off at once to its destination! Something, however, there is to be said on the Swiss side of the question, and the scarcity of railway accidents in this little state is a fact that stands out in favourable contrast to our constantly recurring fatal collisions, with their long lists of killed and wounded, that sadden and awe us as we read of them in the daily papers.

Coire was reached at last, and soon left again, and we were off for the Upper Engadine, by the defile of

Schyn and the Julier road. The weather was dull and rainy, which was probably the reason why we did not admire the pass, as much as we were led to expect that we should; but the sky cleared as we came down upon Silva Plana, and the sun shone brightly on that rather pretty little town, and its lake of curiously vivid green. We did not stop there, however, but proceeded at once to Samâden, which, though small, has the dignity of being the principal town of the district.

Judging by the crowded state of all the hotels in Engadine, I should say that before very long every tourist in Europe will have visited that locality. Wherein its great attraction lies I never could make out, as in point of scenery it is decidedly inferior, with the exception of Pontresina, to the other mountain regions of Switzerland, and the climate changes too rapidly from extreme heat to extreme cold to be called good. Of course many invalids go for the benefit of its peculiarly dry air, and of the far-famed waters of St. Moritz, and when the hotels there are crammed till they can contain no more, the baffled patients take refuge in all the neighbouring villages, from whence they can still reach the baths and the spring; but even after allowing for this portion of the visitors, there is an over-whelming mass remaining, partly English, but principally German, who do not seem to have any object in going, but who yet remain at Samâden and St.

Moritz, and, as far as I could make out, occupy themselves by taking a little drive every day up or down the road.

Certainly they cannot be detained there by admiration for the valley of the Inn. With its straight roads, bordered by tall telegraph posts, its river, partly enclosed like a canal between straight banks, its stunted trees, and bleak stony mountains, it is as devoid of beauty as it is possible for an Alpine valley to be; nor is it improved by the addition of a series of white, pasteboard-looking villages, all exactly resembling each other, and dotted along with tiresome regularity, at intervals of about three miles; every little town possessing in its centre an ugly church, with an enormous tower, twice too high for its surroundings, and glaring with whitewash. The only redeeming point in the landscape is the pretty opening of a side valley towards Pontresina, where a glimpse of snowy peaks, and a foreground of wooded mountains, seem to invite the traveller to explore its recesses.

We resisted these attractions for two days, as we wanted to ascend the Piz Ott, a sharp rocky point immediately behind Samâden, said to afford a very fine view; but at the end of that time, the weather being still unfavourable, and our patience exhausted, we gave up the mountain and left the place.

Besides the enforced idleness which the clouds condemned us to, we had many discomforts there to

contend with at home. No rooms were to be found in any hotel, and we were obliged to put up at a house in the village, which was not just the abode one would have chosen. It belonged to a chemist, who, his niece informed us, had one of the most superior establishments of the kind to be found anywhere. She spoke of him as if he were a very great man indeed, and so perhaps he was, but he cannot have been distinguished for cleanliness, judging by the entrance and staircase of his house. The floor beneath ours was let for a school, but fortunately it was holiday time, and those rooms were silent and deserted; not so however a room above them, next to us, where a brass band assembled in the evening, and spent an hour in practising discords in various keys. In this residence, the eyes, the ears, and the nose suffered in turn, and at the end of two days, as I have said before, we could stand it no longer, and we turned our backs on Samâden and Piz Ott, which latter had sulked into a cloud, and went off nothing loth towards the Bernina chain, hoping for better fortune at Pontresina.

In this expectation we were not disappointed; admittance to any of the overcrowded hotels we found indeed to be impossible, but we succeeded in securing two comfortable rooms, in a perfectly clean lodging-house, not very far from the Hotel Steinbock, where we had to go for our meals, and with this arrangement we were content and even thankful, knowing

by late experience how much worse off we might have been. With the weather, however, there was no qualification to our satisfaction, when we rose early the next morning, and found that every cloud had vanished, as if by magic, from the sky, and that the air had that peculiar transparency which comes with the first clearing after a long period of rain.

The most usual excursion from Pontresina, is the ascent of Piz Languard, and everyone pronounced that this day, the finest there had been for several weeks, was the time to seize for the expedition.

It is a great advantage to the place, to have so beautiful a view brought within the range of even quite moderate walkers. Except the Görnergrat, or the Bella Tola, I know of no mountain at all equal in height, that is so easy of access as Piz Languard. Two thirds of the ascent are practicable on horseback, and the remaining portion, the peak, composed of shattered rock and stones, and which might have given some trouble, has been arranged in flights of stairs, which, but for the want of balusters, are nearly as convenient as those one sometimes meets with in small Swiss or Italian inns; indeed, I have once or twice found the ascent to my bedroom a greater piece of climbing, while it lasted, than that of this mountain.

The unexpected beauty of the day had attracted many like ourselves, and when we attained it, the summit was literally crowded with people. There

was such a coming and going, eating and drinking, questioning and answering, exclaiming and laughing, that we felt quite bewildered, and as if we had got by mistake mixed up in some garden party or picnic in a fashionable watering-place. I fear it is unsociable not to be always glad to meet one's fellow creatures, and to see them enjoying themselves, but somehow, on one of these great watch-towers of nature, one would rather be alone, or with only one or two friends, to admire and wonder in comparative silence, than to be surrounded by a buzz of small talk, that jars amid the grandeur of such a scene.

It is impossible to exaggerate the magnificence of this panorama, extending in one immense circle all around. Like some vast sea, tossing aloft its crested waves, the mighty chains of mountains undulate in apparently endless ridges, and peaks arise of every shape and size, from the dark limestone rock to the glittering snowy cone, till the eye is almost wearied with their variety, and the mind, awed and perplexed by their number, goes back inquiringly to that time in the dim past, when the divine command went forth 'Let the dry land appear,' and upheaved by volcanic agency, these giant firstborn of the earth rose out of the seething waters.

To us, most of the mountains around were quite new; the beautiful Bernina chain, with its snow-clad summits and great glaciers, we then saw for the first time, and when we had got a little familiar with

it, there came the Orteler range, equally unknown, and beyond it countless mountains of Tirol, with whose names even we were scarcely acquainted. It seemed hopeless to try and understand them all, and involuntarily we turned to the west, longing for the sight of an old friend among this crowd of new celebrities to whom we were being introduced. A few minutes of search, and then came the glad recognition. There was no need to ask for names now; soft with extreme distance, but still looking massive from its superior size, we spied the great Monte Rosa chain. The well-known peaks could be seen distinctly traced against the crystal sky, the Lyskam, the Zwillinge, the Breithorn; there was but one great blank among this group of intimates; the matchless pinnacle of the Matterhorn we looked for in vain, hidden by its more southern neighbours, it was invisible from where we stood. Turning more to the north, we could see the Tödi range, and beyond it a slender spire, which we were told was the Finsteraarhorn. An hour spent in gazing on such a scene is one not easily forgotten, and the remembrance of it will rise to the mind and give pleasure on many a day to come.

Another very charming and easy excursion from Pontresina, and yet one not often made, is the tour of Piz Surlei, called the Surlei Forcla. Starting while the morning was still fresh and cool, a pleasant path through grass and forest brought us

at about 8 o'clock to the Baths of St. Moritz, whose large, formal square we passed, stopping for a moment to wonder at the incongruous sight of such a fashionable promenade, with its marble fountain, its band, its crowd of well-dressed water-drinkers pacing demurely up and down, the whole thing looking more like some German watering-place than like part of an Alpine valley.

Feeling quite unfit, either in appearance or ideas, to join in this procession, we coasted cautiously outside, and once more diving into the pine forest, we followed the winding path till it brought us opposite to Silva Plana; here it is best to leave it, and turning at once to the left, to go straight up the side of the mountain. The scattered fir trees give pleasant patches of shade, and the ascent, though steep, is at first over soft green turf, delightful to walk on; by degrees, however, the grass diminishes, and the stones preponderate, till the last hour is very rough, though not difficult.

This must be a very little frequented pass, to judge from the shrill whistle of the marmots, who, disturbed by our unwonted appearance, gave constant warning to their comrades of the impending danger. These shy little animals are most difficult to catch a glimpse of, having always a sentinel on the alert, and darting, at the first sound of his alarm, into their various holes. How anyone ever contrives to shoot them I am at a loss to imagine; however, it is

done occasionally, as I have sometimes in mountain inns been offered a very unpleasant looking black hash which purported to be composed of marmots.

The summit of the col, though rather more than 9,000 feet in height, is attained without passing over any snow or ice, but once on it there is no lack of either in the view presented. To the right the snow slopes of Piz Corvatsch reach nearly down to the pass, while directly opposite the eye ranges over a vast extent of glacier, backed by the snowy peaks of the Bernina chain. Most prominent in this prospect are the noble glaciers of Rosegg and Tschierva, streaming down from their respective snow-fields, and meeting at the foot of a ridge of dark, pointed rocks, which, seen from where we stood, bore a singular resemblance to the Grands Mulets.

This day we were not fortunate in weather, and the clouds soon came down provokingly and spoiled the beauty of the view. They must be our excuse for having, after a little while, turned our backs, figuratively speaking, on these grand scenes, and concentrated our attention on an unpromising looking little stone hut, towards which we descended. Our guides had preceded us into it, and they soon emerged, carrying bowls of rich milk and freshly-made butter, which, added to our provisions, composed a most excellent repast, and we enjoyed ourselves after a fashion, in spite of the clouds. While

thus engaged we saw two German gentlemen and their guide come down from the Piz Corvatsch; like ourselves, they partook of the good fare of the stone hut, and then pursued their way down the steep slopes which lead to the Rosegg valley.

As we sat and watched them it was curious to observe their different degrees of proficiency in the noble art of walking. First went the guide, strong and active looking, stepping lightly from one tuft of grass to another, and getting rapidly and not ungracefully over the ground, without any apparent exertion or fatigue. Then followed one of the gentlemen, going at a fair pace too, but striding along heavily and with effort, evidently at the top of his speed, and a little beyond what was safe, to judge by the occasional trips and recoveries he made, and the hard jerks with which he got down where the steps were long or stony. A long way behind them came the second gentleman, shuffling and shambling, with a great deal of movement and play of stick, his head down, his knees bent, working very hard, yet making little way; stumbling over stones, slipping on grass, sticking in mud, and seeming at every step in imminent danger of a fall. How he escaped one I do not know. I thought our guides never would stop laughing at him, and we laughed a little ourselves too, I fear, for we really could not help it, but we did it as it were under protest, knowing that our own movements were by no means faultless, and

wishing to avoid that imprudent line of conduct which is particularly forbidden to the dwellers in glass houses.

After a short, steep descent, we reached the Rosegg valley, and there anyone who does not object to a severe shaking on a very rough road may have a vehicle without springs to meet them from Pontresina, and thus save at least an hour and a half of walking. Not being tired we preferred the latter mode of proceeding, and should have enjoyed the return through the valley very much, had not the rain come down in torrents and wet us through.

Taking it quite leisurely, this expedition only required nine hours, and anyone who chose to drive to Silva Plana, and have, as I have just said, a *char* to meet them at the head of the Rosegg valley, could make a beautiful and enjoyable excursion, with very little fatigue.

Chapter V.

THE DIAVOLEZZA PASS AND PIZ MORTERATSCH.

More arduous, but much more interesting than the Surlei Forcla, is the tour of Mont Pers, also called the Diavolezza pass. By driving to the inn on the Bernina road, and having a carriage to meet us at the foot of the Morteratsch glacier, we reduced the walking part of the expedition to little more than eight hours, but as the way lies principally over rocks, snow, and ice, the services of a thoroughly good guide are required for ladies. We were fortunate in that respect, as we were able to engage Christian Grass, one of the best and most popular guides of Pontresina.

The ascent from the Bernina inn, over *débris*, rocks, and snow, is so like the ascent of many other cols, that I need not stop to describe it, but the way from the top of the pass to the foot of the Morteratsch glacier is as beautiful and pleasant a walk on ice as I have ever taken.

The first step in the descent is to reach the Isle Pers, an island of rock that rises abruptly from the midst of the surrounding sea of ice, and from which the view over glacier and snow is very striking. It has been likened on this account to the Jardin, and perhaps bears some resemblance to it, but it loses by the comparison, as few, if any, scenes in the Alps can equal for grandeur and wildness that beheld from the celebrated rock of the Talêfre glacier. It is better to enjoy the beauties before one's eyes, without allowing the greater beauties already seen to rise too vividly to the mind, and a nicer place is not often found whereon to sit and have one's mid-day meal than the rocky summit of the Isle Pers.

A short, steep descent and we were again upon the ice, and soon standing at the foot of the magnificent ice-fall of the Pers, after which it joins with, and is absorbed in, the great Morteratsch glacier.

Here Christian Grass came out to great advantage. Instead of choosing the usual route across to a path on the moraine, he kept to the centre of the glacier, and did the honours of the ice-world around us with the air of an obliging host taking his guests from room to room in his house, and showing them its various treasures. But no host has such a house, and no house in the world, I am sure, can contain such wonders as those we saw on the Morteratsch glacier. Séraes of every shape and size, now square and massive, like fortresses of crystal, now tall and

tapering, like silver spires, and in colour of every imaginable shade, from the palest opal to the deepest sapphire. Gigantic crevasses, in whose blue depths the eye lost itself; overhanging cornices of snow, fringed with icicles clear as day; tiny rivulets, wandering with gentle murmur between their glistening banks; mimic glens and valleys, whose sloping sides were blue and transparent as the heavens above; waterfalls that shone and sparkled in the sun as they dashed over their rocks of ice; wondrous caverns, into whose unknown depths the glacier torrents leaped with hollow sound, and were seen no more. Shapes endless and fantastic, assumed for the moment by the ever-changing ice; wide arched bridges, gothic windows, turrets, minarets, and every one perfectly beautiful of its kind.

It is vain to try and describe the wonders of the ice world. No magic palace of fairy lore was ever imagined so beautiful; no other scene on earth at all resembles it, and those who have only groped about the stained and wasted base of a glacier, cannot form the faintest idea of its upper loveliness. We decided, as we drove home that afternoon, that a pleasanter occupation could not be found for a bright summer day than to wander here and there through the mazes of the Morteratsch glacier.

The most considerable of our excursions from Pontresina was the ascent of Piz Morteratsch. Though it was not accomplished till quite at the end

of our time there, it had been thought of from the very beginning; but many were the vicissitudes that the plan was doomed to undergo before it was finally carried into execution. For no particular reason that I can assign, I had formed a great wish to ascend this mountain, and directly on our arrival at Pontresina I had despatched Amrhein to look for some man capable of taking us up it. In due time he returned, bringing with him a guide, highly recommended by the master of the Krone Hotel. He was an elderly man, and did not appear particularly active, but he had a plausible way of talking which imposed considerably on us all. I began at once about Piz Morteratsch, but he looked disapprovingly at me.

'Piz Morteratsch?' he said. 'Oh! it is not fit for ladies.'

Knowing that in Mr. Ball's 'Alpine Guide' it is mentioned as 'a safe and not difficult expedition,' I was not to be so easily put down, so I said, quite briskly, 'Why not? There is no difficulty, I hear.'

'Oh, yes,' he answered, 'there is great difficulty!'

'What difficulty?' we asked.

'Why, the snow. It is in such bad order this year, so frightfully soft! At every step you would be up to your knees. No lady could stand the fatigue of it; you would be hours and hours in the

snow. Why,' he continued, turning to Amrhein, 'even the strongest men cannot lead for more than a quarter of an hour at a time, but have to go to the back to rest.'

Never was a more unpromising account given, and for the time the expedition, and my hopes, fell to the ground; but in the course of a day or two we discovered that several other statements made by this guide were not strictly in accordance with the truth, and I am afraid that I was, on the whole, rather pleased with these proofs of his duplicity, as I began to hope that he had, perhaps, maligned Piz Morteratsch, and that it was not really so formidable as he had represented it. Like sick people, or their relations, who, not satisfied with the opinion of one doctor, apply to another in the hopes of a more favourable verdict, we called in Christian Grass, and consulted him on the state of our patient, said to be suffering from an attack of soft snow. Not unlike real doctors on these occasions, he gave quite a different opinion from that of his fellow-practitioner.

'Soft snow?' he said. 'Not a bit of it! The snow is in very good order.'

'And do people not sink up to their knees at each step?' we asked.

'Certainly not, if they start in good time. There is no difficulty on the *snow!*' with a great stress on the last word.

'Then where is the difficulty?'

'Oh, on the rocks,' he answered.

Here was a new blow impending! 'Are they very bad?' I asked, uneasily.

'No, not bad at all; only very steep.'

And so by degrees we found out that the character of this highly respectable mountain had been basely taken away by our first informant, and I had my way after all, and, thanks to the very efficient help I received from Grass and Amrhein, got up it without any serious difficulty. It is, however, not an expedition to be recommended to ladies, unless they are used to mountain work, and have steady heads, in which case it is a very pleasant piece of climbing, and the snowy summit affords a magnificent view.

The air was curiously warm there, and though at a height of more than 12,000 feet, we were able to sit down quite comfortably to enjoy the prospect. We found two German or Swiss gentlemen and their guides already established there, but they did not seem to have liked the ascent much, and sighed a good deal over the recollection of its fatigues. One of them informed me in a melancholy voice that he weighed 200 lbs. Not being up in Swiss weights, this presented no definite idea to my mind, so not knowing exactly what to say, I put on a face, which I meant to be expressive of sympathy, but I afterwards remembered that I had on a linen mask at the time, and that it must unfortunately have been lost upon him completely.

The snow was in very good order, and the descent on the steep slopes of the upper part of the mountain was rapid and very pleasant, but on the *névé* below the bridges were shaky, and we had one or two narrow escapes of going through their frail substance. On the top of the rocks we halted again, and to fortify ourselves for the descent had a last meal, for which I am at a loss to find a name, as we had already breakfasted, lunched, and dined, and it was still too early for supper.

'Now, madame,' said Christian Grass to me, 'you'll see how well we shall go down these rocks. Come along.'

So I went along at this invitation, and I must say, I never had a guide before or since who said so many encouraging things. On a steep place, his tongue never ceased for a minute, and directions and encomiums followed each other in rapid and perplexing succession. I fear a translation will give but a faint idea of the comical effect of his conversation.

'Put your foot there—very well! And the other one there—capital! Now stay where you are. That's right! and hold on tight. Very clever! Now come down to me. '*Das geht famos!* Now wait a bit. Quite right! Now put your foot on that rock—beautiful! And that foot here. *Brava Lei!* Could not be better.'

All this time, I was going through the simple process of putting one foot before the other, without

even the responsibility of choosing where to place them, so that no amount of vanity could make me appropriate any of the praise bestowed, but had he addressed all these flattering observations to himself they would have been most true, as it was wonderful to see the perfect ease and precision with which he descended, never giving a glance at his own footsteps, but always keeping a watch on mine. Once past the rocks, we got on to the Rosegg glacier, by its curious triple moraine, and a pleasant walk on the crisp ice brought us in time down to the other road at the head of the valley, from whence a drive home ended this most enjoyable day.

Interspersed through the few fine days on which we made the excursions I have mentioned, there had come many wet ones, which I have passed over in silence; and as we had still a good deal to do, and the season was fast advancing, we feared to delay any longer at Pontresina, and decided to start at once for the Baths of Bormio.

A fortnight spent in the Engadine did not much alter the first impression it had made upon us. We still thought its scenery over-praised, and its climate unpleasant. The air there certainly is peculiarly light and bracing, but it is not very agreeable to be frozen every morning, baked at noon, and perished at night, nor to rise, as we did one morning in August, and find a white world all round. Then the situation of Pontresina, though by far the best

in that district, still appeared to me rather badly chosen, for though close to the Bernina chain, it is so placed that scarcely any of the most beautiful peaks are visible from it. As a centre for excursions, it has no doubt great advantages, and to those who can walk well enough, to penetrate into the recesses of the magnificent chain at whose base it lies, it is a most attractive spot.

We had heard a great deal, before visiting the Engadine, of the incivility of its inhabitants, but I must do them the justice to say that we experienced nothing of the kind. Perhaps these accounts refer to St. Moritz, and not having stayed in that place, I can of course say nothing of it, but certainly at Samâden and Pontresina we found everyone with whom we came in contact obliging and friendly. The hotel-keepers seemed anxious to find room for us in their overcrowded houses, and when they could not accommodate us themselves, they helped us to find lodgings elsewhere. The prices, far from being exorbitant, as we had been led to expect, were, we thought, very moderate; the breakfasts and dinners at Pontresina were cheaper than we had found them in any other frequented part of Switzerland; the food, if not very *recherché*, was still quite wholesome and eatable, and the bread we pronounced to be the very best we had ever tasted anywhere. On the whole, most of the arrangements were good, the only drawback being that every hotel and house

seemed to have more inhabitants pressed into it than it could conveniently hold.

Whence come all the people who fill the innumerable hotels of Switzerland? and what became of them before these hotels were built for their accommodation? It is no use in trying to solve these mighty problems, to answer glibly, 'Oh, they all stayed at home,' because, if this were the case, then the various quarters from which they come would now be empty, whereas it is the experience of every traveller who moves much about the world, that each place at home or abroad to which he returns after some time of absence, he finds to have become larger and fuller than when he last visited it. I have never as yet heard these questions answered in a satisfactory manner.

Chapter VI.

THE BERNINA PASS AND THE VAL VIOLA.

The usual way from the Engadine to Bormio is, as most people know, by the Bernina carriage pass; but anyone who will take the trouble to give a glance at a map will at once perceive that whereas that road leads round two sides of a triangle, the Val Viola, forming the third side, is the direct course. Having read in our guide book that we could drive to La Rösa, a small inn on the Bernina pass, and that from there seven hours' walking would bring us through the Val Viola to the Baths of Bormio, in an evil hour we determined on that course, as shorter and more amusing than the circuitous carriage route.

Starting at 6 o'clock, in that universal and rickety little Swiss conveyance of which all the varieties are generalised under the name of an *Einspanner*, a very picturesque drive brought us in three hours to the hamlet of La Rösa.

The morning had been foggy, and we despaired, as we left Pontresina, of obtaining a farewell glimpse of the beautiful Bernina chain; but just as we got opposite the opening of the Morteratsch valley, at an apparently incredible height above us, the sharp crest of Piz Bernina rose suddenly out of the surrounding sea of mist, and then we were fortunate enough to be witnesses of one of the most wonderful effects I have ever beheld in the Alps. The fog which enveloped the whole chain in one dense white cloud became gradually but most rapidly transparent, and as it faded away, outline after outline, peak after peak, stole almost imperceptibly into sight; at first vapoury as the surrounding atmosphere, they seemed to solidify as the mist cleared, till in less than three minutes the whole range stood out in startling distinctness against a sky of unclouded blue. An instant before all had been blank as white canvass, and now painted with magic colours before our very eyes lay the picture quite complete, the exquisite creation of that great master some trace of whose perfection is imprinted on all His works.

It was 9 o'clock when we reached La Rösa, where we were to part with our carriage and engage a man to carry our bags, and to show us the way. To procure this individual and set him going we calculated would take half an hour; seven hours was the time given by Mr. Ball for the pass; to these we added two more hours, in order to allow for our pace

not being exactly equal to his, and also for some periods of rest by the way; this made in all nine hours and a half, which would bring us into Bormio at half-past 6 o'clock, just in good time to have our supper and retire early to bed. That was the way in which we did the pass in imagination; now I am coming to the reality.

First of all, there was no porter to be found at home; it was haymaking time, and everyone had gone up to the mountains to engage in that occupation, literally while the sun shone. A child, however, was despatched to the upper meadows, and in rather more than an hour returned accompanied by a very dirty ragged boy, who was introduced as our porter. It turned out upon inquiry that he had never been over the pass, and consequently did not know the way; but we were informed triumphantly that he was brother to the guide who did know the way, but who was at present unfortunately from home. As no choice was offered us, we were forced to take him, and I think we were considered unreasonable not to be quite satisfied with so near a relation to the right man, the next best thing, we ought to have felt, to the man himself. Nothing could be procured on which to pack the bags, so they were tied together with a piece of rope, and the dirty boy, flinging them carelessly over his shoulder, set off with a queer, slouching gait, followed by three rather discontented people, my sister, myself, and

our oberland guide. We had made another calculation, and found that we could not hope to be at our journey's end before half-past 7 o'clock; however, there would be daylight till almost 8, so we had still half an hour to spare in case of accidents.

It soon appeared that whatever the La Rösa guide's course might have been, that of his brother was very eccentric. First he led us down a steep, stony place and up another, and then he plunged into a thick forest, where the faintly marked path seemed completely unused, and was overgrown with branches of trees, under which we had to creep, while our hats, veils, and dresses caught everywhere, and our progress was consequently very slow. Once clear of this jungle, he again repeated the process of going down hill and up again, after which he was preparing for a third descent when Amrhein interfered. He said he knew we were going wrong, and propounded the unanswerable argument that we should never get up to the top of the col if we were always going down hill. This speech was translated into Italian for the dirty boy's benefit, and, perhaps struck with its truth, he went off to a field close by, where some men were working, and consulted them as to our future course. They counselled a retreat, and to strike up the mountain further back, and this time our young conductor chose a steep, ascending path, over which a mountain torrent danced sportively down to meet us. A good deal the worse, or at least

the wetter for this encounter, we finally reached an upland alp and some châlets, and there I fancy we really did get, for the first time, into the right path, and that our deviations afterwards were not very considerable. Much precious time had, however, been lost in the first wanderings, and when, after a good deal of rough walking amidst moss, grass, branches and stumps of trees, rocks, stones, and beds of torrents, we at last reached the rather bleak-looking ridge, though its height was not quite 8,000 feet, we had taken nearly five hours from La Rösa to attain it, and it was past 3 o'clock.

A very short descent brought us to a chalet, where we asked in vain for milk, all the supply for the day having been already converted into the first stage of a cheese. There we consulted a queer-looking old gentleman in a long-tailed coat, who seemed to be the owner of the establishment, as to the time we still required to finish our journey. Two hours, he said, to the first village, Semoggio; thence an hour to the second village, Isolaccia, and one hour more to the Baths of Bormio. This would just bring us in before nightfall, we thought, and, buoyed up by this hope, we started cheerfully for the descent.

The path was particularly bad and ungainly to walk on; it was partly paved with round, smooth stones, and partly strewed with loose ones, and flooded now and then by mountain torrents, so that, without ever being difficult, it was always trouble-

some, requiring constant care to avoid a fall on its slippery surface, and making speed impossible to us. Our progress must indeed have been very slow, or else we were misinformed as to time, for nearly two hours passed, but no Semoggio became visible. Presently I inquired of an old man we met how far we still were from that village. 'Ah!' he said, 'you are tired, I suppose,' and then, in true Italian fashion, he gave the answer which he thought would please me most, utterly regardless of the facts, '*una mezz' orina.*' So we pushed on for half an hour, but still the desired Semoggio was not to be seen. This time we applied to two countrywomen for information. '*Povere donne, vengano qua?*' they exclaimed in a compassionate tone, '*Una buon' ora ci vuole,*' which statement turned out to be true, and at near 7 o'clock we reached that long-expected stage of our journey.

Only one hour more to Isolaccia, and then a *char* road to Bormio. We had foolishly jumped at the conclusion, that where there was a road for a *char* there would of course be a *char* for the road.

From Semoggio there was a sensible improvement in the path, and we could have increased our pace considerably, to make up for lost time, had the light permitted us; but the evening was very cloudy, and the darkness gained so rapidly on us that by the time we reached Isolaccia we could scarcely see a step in advance. With some difficulty we groped our way into the village; there was no light, no stir,

no sound; it seemed like a city of the dead. At last we stumbled upon two women, standing under an archway, and inquired of them where we could get a carriage. If we had asked them for a balloon they could not have been more surprised. 'A carriage!' they repeated, there was not such a thing in the whole place. And how long would it take us to walk to Bormio? 'Two hours.' Was there an inn in the village? 'Yes, there,' they answered, pointing vaguely into the darkness, and after that information they disappeared round a corner.

We looked at each other in blank consternation. Judging by the small amount of knowledge which our dirty porter possessed of the way in the daylight, it was certain that he would know nothing whatever of it in the black gloom, which now replaced the last glimmer of evening. What was to be done?

I suggested that we should look for a man who knew the road to Bormio well, but Amrhein shook his head, and said, in a melancholy voice, that he did not think there were any men in the village, nothing but old women. Having given way to this depressing sentiment, he seemed utterly cast down by it, and made no further observation. As he could not speak Italian there was no use in sending him to reconnoitre, so after some further consultation it was decided that he and my sister should remain together in an open space, where their forms were just dimly visible, while the dirty boy and I went off,

like Diogenes of old, in quest of a man, only that unfortunately our resemblance to that celebrated cynic did not amount to the possession of a lantern. After some fruitless search we came at last to a house, in one of whose upper windows a light shone, and, encouraged by this first sign of life that we had met with, I proceeded to knock at the door, while my companion standing under the window called to the inhabitants. At first we were both mild in our efforts, but as no one took any notice of us we became more and more importunate, till it ended in my pounding as hard as I could on the door, and the dirty boy roaring as loud as he could at the window.

I really felt quite ashamed of the noise we made in this quiet, respectable little village, where, I suppose, most of the inhabitants were already asleep, and had there been any police there we should no doubt have been taken up, as we deserved, but our excuse must be that our case was desperate, and required a desperate remedy. At last our combined exertions were rewarded; the door opened, I drew hurriedly back, and the tall figure of a man appeared, while a voice, not expressive of much gratification, inquired who we were and what we wanted. Upon this the dirty boy came forward and took the leading part in the conversation. He explained that we were benighted travellers, wanting to get on to the Baths of Bormio, and not exactly knowing how to accomplish it.

'The Baths of Bormio! It will take you a good hour and a half to get there.'

'Well,' said the dirty boy, in an insinuating tone, you appear to me to be a *galantuomo;* will you come with us?'

There was a pause, and then the cautious counter-question, 'What will you give me if I do?'

'Oh! these are ladies,' said the dirty boy, flourishing his arm towards where I stood. 'Perhaps you will do it *per compiacenza?*'

'No,' said the *galantuomo*, without a moment's hesitation, 'most certainly not.'

Fearing that in his anxiety to make a good bargain my companion was rather overstepping the mark, and that the negotiations might be broken off abruptly, I joined in the conversation at this juncture, and inquired what the *galantuomo* valued himself at. After some reflection he named six francs as his price. Knowing that he expected to be beaten down, I insinuated that I did not think him worth quite so much.

'Well, what will you give me?' he asked.

'Five francs,' I answered. I am sure now, that in my anxiety to secure him, I offered much more than he expected.

'*Va bene*,' he answered condescendingly, 'I will come with you for five francs if you will give me a glass of wine besides.'

'*Va bene*,' I replied, 'I will give you five francs

and a glass of wine if you will bring a lantern along with you.'

And so the bargain was concluded, and I returned in high glee to my sister and our guide to announce the success which had crowned our undertaking. They on their part had not been idle, and had caught a little cripple, who professed to be the bell-ringer of the place, and who held out hopes, in case I failed, of being able to procure a man to show the way; so we had another string to our bow in case of the one already in it breaking. With this improvement in our prospects our spirits had risen considerably, and when in about ten minutes the *galantuomo* appeared carrying the lantern, we were quite ready to follow him cheerfully through the abyss of darkness into which he plunged.

A blacker night I never beheld; heavy clouds covered the whole sky, and occasional wreaths of mist came down into the valley, and enveloped us in a drift of close fine rain. We could literally see nothing but the shadowy figure of our conductor, and the small bit of road on which his lantern threw a dazzling glare; but we must have been close to a river most of the time, for we heard the rushing sound of water continually near us, and we crossed several rather rickety wooden bridges. We also passed through two villages, silent and deserted as that from which we had started, and after we had been going for about an hour the *galantuomo*

stopped, and calling our attention to some lights in the distance gave the welcome information that they shone from the Baths of Bormio. Encouraged by this sight we continued to press on, but nearly three-quarters of an hour elapsed before we reached our destination, and mounting some steep zigzags turned into a courtyard, and stepped from the wild dark night into the blaze of a well-lighted hall, from which several waiters and the manager came forward to receive us; we had been about sixteen hours on the road from Pontresina.

We were a queer looking party to enter a well-regulated hotel, and I almost wonder they let us in. With our travel-stained clothes, and our boots covered with mud, we and our guide cut but a poor figure, and our porter looked, if possible, dirtier and more untidy than when he started, while even the *galantuomo* did not improve by being distinctly seen, and presented a ridiculous appearance, standing in the middle of the hall with his lantern in his hand. However, we were most hospitably received, and half an hour later, sitting comfortably at our supper, we were able to laugh at the recollection of our many vicissitudes throughout the day.

After talking the whole expedition over we came to the conclusion that it is scarcely one to be recommended to ladies; not from its difficulties, for there are none, but from the fact that the scenery it presents is not striking enough to be a sufficient

reward for the fatigue which must be incurred in so long a day. Of course we did it under adverse circumstances, but even allowing for every event being favourable, which is seldom the case, I do not think that ladies could reach the Baths of Bormio in less than thirteen hours from Pontresina. This is by no means too long a day, if there be a proportionate amount of enjoyment afforded by the beauty and variety of the views, or if the interest produced by the incidents and obstacles of the way be sufficient to engross the attention; but where neither great admiration nor excitement are provoked, the mind is apt to dwell too much on the length of the walk performed or still to be done, and the thoughts, not enough occupied by the surroundings, turn naturally upon the fatigue, the heat, or the inconvenience experienced at the moment.

Now the first part of the journey, that included in the Bernina pass from Pontresina to La Rösa, is very beautiful, as beautiful as any carriage road I have ever been, and the way from La Rösa to within about an hour of the col is decidedly pretty, with its succession of pine woods and rich alps, its foaming torrents, dashing noisily along, and its silent green tarns, nestling quiet and calm in their wooded hollows, while the Corno di Dosdè rises in stern dark precipices at the head of the valley, but the summit is disappointing; it is wild and desolate, without being either grand or picturesque, and the

interminably long valley, which descends thence to Bormio, is at first bleak and stony, and then becomes tame and uninteresting. There is such a profusion of fine cols in the Alps, of all heights and lengths, and of every degree of difficulty, that one can afford to be fastidious, and the pass of the Val Viola is not one that most people would select to repeat themselves, or to recommend to their friends.

Chapter VII.

MONTE CONFINALE AND THE STELVIO PASS.

With very little fatigue still remaining, we sallied forth next morning after breakfast to see the place, which on our arrival had been so completely hidden from us, and I must say I was rather disappointed with it. I had often heard these baths mentioned, and had formed my own idea of them, without ever inquiring whether the picture imagined was correct. I expected to find them in a warm, bright valley, sheltered from the north by a massive mountain barrier, and basking in a summer sun, where I should behold once more the rounded outlines, the softened shadows, and the wondrously transparent atmosphere of Italy.

What I did see was a large, well-built looking house, unsheltered by trees, standing on a high terrace at the entrance of a wild ravine, up which is carried the famous pass of the Stelvio. To the west lay the

valley, down whose incline we had spent so many hours, and which looked bleak and sterile seen by the full light of day. Opposite the hotel another valley ran due south, the prettiest of the three, yet by no means striking. All round were mountains, none of any great height, whose stony sides, and summits crowned with steep walls of dark grey rock, gave a sombre character to the whole scene. The sun was shining, but leaden-coloured clouds obscured part of the sky; while down the rocky gorge a wintry wind came at intervals, in sudden blasts, beating about the flowers and shrubs of the garden, carrying off unwary people's hats, and whirling the white dust in columns along the Stelvio road.

Not particularly delighted with this prospect, we ordered a carriage at 1 o'clock, and leaving the hotel which, as far as our experience of it went, seemed very comfortable, drove off at once to Sta. Caterina. Rather more than a mile from the baths, the village of Bormio is passed, and from thence the scenery improves rapidly. The valley leading to Sta. Caterina is thickly wooded, and the trees, principally larch and fir, are very fine, in this respect presenting a pleasing contrast to those of the Engadine, which, I suppose, owing to the great elevation of the district where they grow, are often stunted and weather-beaten. The carriage road, narrow but good, winds up the valley at some height

above the bed of the Frodolfo torrent, and every now and then, through the deep green of the pines, glimpses are caught of the graceful peak of Monte Tresero. At last, after a very pretty drive of nearly three hours, the valley widens, more snowy summits come into sight, and, crossing a wooden bridge, the baths of Sta. Caterina are reached.

This establishment, though situated in the midst of scenery of the highest order, is in itself most unornamental; it is a large, rough-looking house, not unlike a factory, standing without any attempt at adornment or decoration, by the roadside. It has a certain air of assertion in its ugliness, like people one sometimes meets, who, not gifted by nature with any comeliness, seem to take a kind of pride in the coarseness and ungainliness of their exterior, and disdain all the little arts and graces by the help of which human beings try to make themselves pleasing to each other.

The internal arrangements of the *stabilimento* are on a par with its exterior. The bedrooms are furnished with the severest simplicity, containing a bed, a table, a chair, a glass, usually on the darkest part of the wall, and that most uncomfortable substitute which Italians have invented for a wash-hand stand, an iron tripod, into which a basin is fixed. Who that travels in Italy has not at times been thrown into utter perplexity by this piece of furniture when, with soap in one hand and towel in the

other, they have searched in vain for a spot on which to deposit them! The general roughness does not, however, extend to the food, which, with the exception of the bread, we found very good; the table d'hôte dinner was excellent, and the price charged for it by no means primitive.

In spite, however, of the few discomforts I have mentioned, Sta. Caterina is a charming place, and one in which, provided the weather were fine, a week might be spent most enjoyably; it abounds, I believe, in pretty excursions, and several fine cols lead from it into Italian and Tirolese valleys, not much known or frequented, but very beautiful. The air is at times rather too sharp, but after all that is not a bad fault for August, and adds considerably to one's walking powers. We have regretted often since that we did not remain longer there, to become better acquainted with the beauties of the neighbourhood, but having gone so far we wanted, if possible, to push on into Tirol and Carinthia, and our time being limited, and the weather very uncertain, we were forced to curtail our visit to this pleasant Alpine station.

There was one excursion, however, that we determined not to leave the place without making, and that was the ascent of Monte Confinale, the panoramic view from whose summit is so justly celebrated. We inquired, on arriving, in which direction it lay, and were shown a mountain exactly opposite the

hotel, principally composed of grass slopes, and ending further back in some rather tame-looking rocks. We thought that for a peak 11,076 feet high it made but little show, and seemed remarkably easy of access, but not knowing the way, we decided to take a local guide along with our own. When, however, this latter came, in the evening, to tell us that all the best guides were engaged, and that we must be satisfied with a second best one for this expedition, we took the information much more philosophically than we should under other circumstances have done, for, to tell the truth, we had got a slight feeling of contempt for the mountain, which seemed in our eyes, as far as difficulties went, to be something on a par with the Aeggischhorn or the Brévent.

The next day was, contrary to our expectations, cloudless, and congratulating ourselves on our good fortune, we set off early, to be beforehand with the fogs that so often in August gather by noon on the mountain tops. The morning air was the sharpest I have ever felt in summer, at least at so moderate a height, but we bore it cheerfully, knowing that it promised well for the day, and tried not to think of our aching fingers, and faces pinched and blue with cold. Soon leaving the trees and the path, we advanced, by steep but pleasant grassy slopes, almost straight up the mountain. Gradually the baths and hamlet of Sta. Caterina sank below us, and the beauti-

ful double peak of Monte Tresero rose higher and higher from its field of snow; beyond it other summits soon became visible; we had to ask and hear their names, and our attention was so much taken up by all these new sights that almost before we expected it we found ourselves at the top of the grassy ridge, while to our right, and not far distant, rose the stony point which had been shown us from below as Monte Confinale.

It looked scarcely an hour off, and we knew at once that it could not be the object of our destination. Appealing for information to the local guide, he pointed out a mountain still distant from us, to the north, I think, of where we stood, and for the first time we looked at the true Monte Confinale, a ridge and peak of shattered rock bounded on one side by slopes of snow and glacier, and on the other, as we afterwards saw, descending precipitously into the valley of Zebru. We had not even reached our ground yet, and the Confinale cannot be seen from Sta. Caterina.

It is a curious fact which we always remark, namely, that, once on the southern side of the Alps, it is impossible to depend on the truth of any information received, either at hotels or from the peasantry, as to the names of places, distances, state of roads or cols, length of time required for expeditions, etc. In the summer of 1873 we spent a week wandering through the exquisite valleys south of the

Monte Rosa chain, and we experienced the same difficulty; we were perpetually being misled by false statements. On one occasion we were told of the same pass by different people that it would take us two hours, four hours, and six hours to do, not one of these answers being the correct one.

I do not think that all these persons, otherwise very friendly and pleasant, mean wilfully to deceive; they gain no advantage, and can have no object in misstating the facts as they do; I suppose they know very little of their own neighbourhood, and give their answers carelessly and incorrectly, without taking the trouble to reflect, and in some cases not liking to confess their ignorance. Probably our informant at Sta. Caterina had never seen Monte Confinale, but knew that those who ascended it went up the grass slopes opposite the hotel, and, seeing a peak above them, concluded it to be that mountain. It is well, therefore, to bear in mind that very little faith should be put by the inquiring traveller in the answers he receives, either in the Italian or Tirolese valleys.

I think on the whole we were pleased to see that our mountain had gained in importance, and soon got over the distance, mostly flat ground, that still divided us from it. Then came a climb up steep slopes of *débris*, and rather slow work it was, as for two steps forward we generally slipped back one in the loose earth and stones on the surface.

We afterwards, in descending, came down on the glacier, and I think we should have done better to go up it also; it was not too steep, and early in the day the snow would have been in good order; however, the local guide thought otherwise, and persevered on over sharp stones of every size, from a pebble to a rock, till Amrhein, spying out an inviting looking *couloir* filled with fresh snow, insisted that we should go up it for a variety. The Italian demurred at first, but finally gave in, and resignedly cut steps, up which we went with comparative ease and comfort. He did not, however, seem to be much at home on snow or ice; the steps which he cut were by no means of the best or most serviceable pattern, and when we reached the glacier he was ever so long before he could accomplish the feat of roping us together at the proper distances. Many were the uncomplimentary observations muttered on his performances by Amrhein, but fortunately, as he could only speak about six words of Italian, and the Sta. Caterina man about six words of German, the conversation between them was very limited, and the peace remained in consequence undisturbed.

The final peak is a chaos of broken rock. It seems wonderful how it ever got into such a mass of confusion. One could almost fancy that some giant of old had gone up there in a bad temper, and, laying about him right and left with his club, had smashed

everything to bits. Whatever may have been the cause of this gigantic ruin, I know that scrambling over it was hard work; without being actually difficult, it was very troublesome. What with catching one's dress on one rock, stumbling over the second, the third toppling down under one's feet, getting jammed in between the fourth and the fifth, scrambling up the sixth, stepping over to the pointed top of the seventh, and so on, we had had enough of it by the time we reached the summit.

But what a glorious view there met our eyes! We thought nothing of the trouble when we saw the reward; it was worth a climb twice as long, over stones twice as disagreeable. Hopeless would be the task even to name all the mountains visible, and could it be accomplished it would still give no idea of the loveliness of the scene. Much has been done with the pen and the brush by those who know how to wield them, but even masters of their art could give but a faint impression, either in language or in painting, of that which can be seen on a bright summer day from the torn summit of Monte Confinale.

Among the numberless mountains around, two mighty masses particularly struck us by their beauty; one was the Orteler range, whose stately bulwarks rose almost perpendicularly from the deep trench of Val Zebru at our feet, and whose three noble peaks, the Orteler, the Zebru, and the König, seemed to

tower into the air. The other, more distant, but scarcely less lovely, was the Monte Cristallo group, fair and white, with its snowy crests glittering against the blue sky.

While we were looking in ever increasing admiration from north to south, from east to west, over this vast circle of snow, the Sta. Caterina guide kept rooting incessantly round the foundations of the stone man, at the imminent risk of bringing him down on our heads, and at last, from some hole or corner of the structure, he triumphantly produced the inevitable bottle. Of course we turned out its contents and inspected them, and of course, among other Alpine names, we found the card of that indefatigable and ubiquitous climber who, to judge by the constant recurrence of his name in all mountaineering books, can have left few, if any, neglected summits among the Alps on whom he has not paid a morning call; be they high or low, easy or difficult of access, he is on visiting terms with them all.

And now our time is up; one more glance round, one more lingering look, and we leave our exalted resting-place, probably never to return, and struggle on our downward way, through the general overthrow, till we reach the glacier, where all is plain sailing, and partly on snow, partly on ice, we descend to the table land below. There we stop, finish our provisions, and again admire the Monte Tresero, which looks better from that point than from the

top, and whose delicate, peaked outline reminds us of that loveliest of the Graian Alps, the snowy, pointed Grivola. We are back at Sta. Caterina just in time to dress and take our places at the table d'hôte.

The dinner over, and the evening still fine, we bid a reluctant adieu to the *Stabilimento*, and drove back to the Baths of Bormio, whence we purposed to start next morning for the Stelvio pass.

We found the very same wind blowing as fiercely down the gorge as it had been the day before, while we, even on the top of the Confinale, had been in perfect calm. I suppose it is caused by some current of air forcing its way through this narrow passage, and if it be fair to judge by the specimen we had of the usual weather of Bormio, I should fancy it a most unpleasant place to remain in; a sort of inland Cape Horn, round which storms are perpetually sweeping. It is, I must allow, scarcely just to pronounce against it after a two days' acquaintance, and perhaps when seen in finer weather it may be very different.

The following day we were off early for the Stelvio pass, and a more dreary drive than we had from Bormio to the top of the col, I cannot imagine. The day was bleak and sunless, and everything from the clouds down had assumed a dull leaden hue; there were no trees, no châlets, no cattle to enliven the scene; nothing but stones and rocks, and the long

road, whose white line could be traced on miles in advance, passing from time to time a desolate looking grey stone house, one of the *cantoniere* of the pass. By degrees as we rose, the cold became more and more intense, till at last we could bear it no longer, and alighting from the carriage, we walked to warm ourselves most of the remainder of the ascent. About an hour below the highest point, the last *cantoniera*, called Sta. Maria, is passed, and here we had to wait two hours for our horses to rest.

The house did not look very inviting, but we had to take refuge in it from the keen air outside, and to pass the time, we ordered some cutlets and potatoes of the lady who received us, and who, it seemed, not discouraged by the disadvantages of living in so remote a spot, had taken some trouble to get herself up according to the fashions of the day. Her head was elaborately decorated with dusty looking hair, and her forehead was surmounted by a row of corkscrew curls, intended I conclude to fall in a fringe upon it, but which had unfortunately become quite unmanageable, and stuck out all round her like rays, giving her quite a startling appearance. Several coloured bows, and a good deal of lace and brass jewellery, formed the ornamental part of her attire.

This young person, whose movements were rapid, dashed into the room in due time with the delicacies above mentioned, and banged them down on the

table with much noise. She seemed abrupt in her conversation too, for on our observing mildly to her that the air was very cold, she answered shortly, that on the contrary it was a warm day, and shot out of the room.

Congratulating ourselves that we had not come in weather considered cold in these regions, we turned our attention to the meal before us; it was chiefly composed of grease, but we ate it nevertheless thankfully, for it possessed the immense advantage of being hot, and was therefore under the circumstances not to be despised.

The process over, there was nothing left but to study the traveller's book, and we were still absorbed in that interesting document when the door opened, and there entered four German men, just arrived by the diligence. What with their creaking boots and their loud voices, they were not particularly agreeable, but we should not have minded those small disadvantages had they not proceeded to light four most execrable cigars, which they smoked incessantly till the time of their departure. Before that happy event occurred, we had been forced to open the window and put our heads out to escape suffocation. At last they went, but though out of sight they were not out of mind, for an intolerable smell of bad tobacco still pervaded the room, when in our turn we vacated it and resumed our journey.

On a fine day the view from the top of the pass

must be magnificent, and the sudden appearance of the great Orteler Spitz quite sensational, as it is disclosed, looking almost within a stone's throw of the road; but, alas! we had to imagine what the effect would be, for a sullen bank of cloud brooded over the mountain's brow, hiding half its beauty, and casting a gloomy shadow on the rocky buttresses and noble glaciers that alone remained visible near its base.

The road, which till the present moment had been particularly good and safe, now changed its character completely; making straight for the edge of a precipice it there disappeared, leaving us in unpleasant doubts as to its further course, if it had any. Nothing daunted by outward circumstances, our coachman screwed up the *mécanique*, put on the drag, and with a crack of his whip, started cheerfully at a brisk trot towards the abyss. I must say I looked over anxiously as we neared the edge, and the history of the ill-fated Jack and Jill, of climbing celebrity, rose ominously to my mind. The sight, though it might have been worse, was not just what one would call reassuring; a series of the steepest zigzags I have ever seen a carriage road twisted into plunged down straight beneath us, till they were finally lost in the blue depths of the valley below. Away we went! Now to the right, now to the left, the dragged wheels grating over the road's surface, and the old carriage creaking at each sharp angle, in which there seemed

but just room for it and the horses to turn. At last these evolutions came to an end, and to my no small relief we reached Trafoi in safety, and halted at the door of its little hotel.

Here we deposited the bulk of our luggage, hired a porter to carry our bags, and driving to the small village and large fort of Gomagoi we alighted, turned up the side valley of Sulden, and walked on about six miles to the hamlet of that name, also called Ste. Gertrud.

This scattered village is beautifully situated at the foot of the Orteler Spitz, while several other fine peaks surround it, and form altogether an exceedingly pleasing landscape, and it is besides a good centre for excursions, of which there are many very interesting to be made in the neighbourhood; but in spite of all these perfections it is a place the recollection of which will never be agreeable, as it was to us the scene of a very great disappointment. It is tiresome to describe one's projects when they fail of being accomplished, so I will not weary my reader with any particulars; suffice it to say, that as we walked up the valley our hopes ran high, and we intended to do great things before we left; but Alpine expeditions depend for fulfilment on so many contingencies, that the slips between the cup and the lip occur there almost oftener than anywhere else, and many a promising young plan is nipped in the bud by the chill frost of contradiction.

In this case our failure was not the fault of the weather, which was rapidly improving; it was not our fault, for we were there on the spot, ready for our work; it was nobody's fault, but the consequence of an unlucky chance by which every good guide, both of Trafoi and Sulden, was either away or engaged for several days.

The master of the hotel, who on our arrival had rushed out to meet us, and welcomed us, according to the custom of the country, with much effusion and shaking of hands, did not I think behave particularly well on the occasion, for he strongly recommended us to take as our leader an individual who turned out, on inspection and further inquiry, to be a mere boy, without a book or certificates of any kind, and whose name, we afterwards discovered, was not even down on the list of guides for the easier excursions about the neighbourhood.

What were we to do? Our own guide, like ourselves, knew nothing of the place, and we dared not trust ourselves to the leadership of this boy on unknown rocks and glaciers. The weather was most uncertain, and to remain three or four days at Sulden on the chance of a guide turning up, was an alternative we did not care to adopt, owing to some of the domestic arrangements of the little inn, the most objectionable of which I am about to enumerate. First of all, the washing accommodation was, to say the least of it, very defective; a caraffe, a tumbler,

and a very small pie-dish composed the whole apparatus, and it was vain to ask for more, nothing else could be produced; the bread was the sourest and worst I have ever tasted anywhere, and the *salle à manger* was also the general smoking-room for the house, into which the German gentlemen, of whom the hotel was full, not only came themselves, but invited their guides to smoke and drink along with them. The prospect of spending several days in idleness without baths and without bread, in the society of these tobacco-consuming individuals, was more than we felt equal to, and after much consideration, we could think of nothing better than to return the next day to Trafoi.

We had on arriving ordered some tea and supper, and having come to a decision as to our future movements, we descended very crest-fallen, and rather cross, to partake of that meal; but in spite of the state of our spirits and tempers, we could not help laughing at the funny preparations which preceded it. First a white cloth was laid on the table; so far well, but the benefit of this arrangement was a good deal neutralized by the addition of a dirty piece of black oilcloth, which was put over it, completely covering the first surface. Next came two plates with knives and forks, then two tumblers with spoons in them, and a bowl of sugar. We felt puzzled; would there come brandy and hot water, and could we by mistake have ordered punch? In some anxiety

we watched for the next arrival, but no, in came the teapot, looking quite orderly, and some milk; so the tumblers were meant for that beverage. We asked the master, who was also the waiter, whether he had no cups. '*Ja wohl*,' he had plenty of cups. Then, we said, we should prefer having two of them for the tea. He looked surprised at us. Very well, he said, if we liked to have cups he would bring them; but though he was ready to indulge us in the freak he evidently thought our tastes eccentric.

So we had our tea according to British manners and customs, and retired in deep dejection to our rooms, to spend the remainder of the evening looking from our windows at the various summits, none of which we were destined to attain. I think Amrhein was almost in a worse state than his *Herrschaft*, and in grim antagonism to the world in general, he gave expression to the uncharitable wish that the rain might come down next morning and spoil everyone's plans.

The sun, however, was not in league with any of the malcontents, and rose the following day clear and bright, shining with impartial kindness on the successful and the disappointed tourists of Sulden. After breakfast we retraced our steps down the valley, and returned to Trafoi, whose hotel was decidedly preferable to that of Sulden, with the exception of the bread, which was the same in both places, old, hard, and dry, and about as sour as Swiss *vin ordinaire*.

We had intended to spend the afternoon in sketching the Orteler Spitz, but that impracticable mountain, as the day advanced, wrapped up its head in fogs and mist, and declined to have its portrait taken; so instead, we strolled up the valley to the so-called Drei Heiligen Brunnen. The walk is extremely picturesque, and the holy fountains give the advantage of an object in taking it, but in themselves they are not worth looking at, being simply one spring, conveyed through hollow trees to three iron spouts, from which the rather good water flows copiously; their sanctity consists in being presided over by three gaudily painted wooden saints, one at each spout; whether there is any legend attached to them or not, I am unaware. The next day being Saturday we had to leave very early, as we wished to reach Botzen that evening and the drive was long.

Looking back now on our doings, I think we made a mistake in hurrying too quickly over the ground between Sta. Caterina and Botzen, and thus lost many of the enjoyable excursions in which that beautiful district seems to abound. We had the excuse of being rather pressed for time, and wanting if possible to see something of the Gross Glockner range, from which we were still a long way off; but it is a better plan, I am sure, to explore thoroughly a limited number of places, than to visit a great many in a cursory manner, and were our summer tour to be made over again, we should now know

better how to lay it out. For us the knowledge has unfortunately come too late, but I will mention one of the modifications advisable, in the hopes that it may perhaps be of use to some one else.

First, then, I think that a week would not be too much to give to Sta. Caterina; what with Monte Confinale, the Forno glacier, the ascent, if within the walker's powers, of Monte Tresero, and some rest and idleness between times, seven days would glide delightfully by in that charming valley, and on leaving it, instead of returning to Bormio by the road already gone over, there is, according to the guide books, a very fine and not too difficult glacier pass that can be taken, the Passo Cevedale, by which Sulden may be reached in one day. From Sulden there are many excursions to be made, and the tourist can, of course, choose those best suited to his or her powers, and regulate the length of time spent there accordingly. Trafoi being within a few hours of Sulden, anyone wishing to see the most interesting part of the Stelvio pass could easily walk and drive from the latter place to the summit of the col, returning to Trafoi the same day. By this means the long and tedious drive from the Baths of Bormio to the top of the Stelvio would be avoided, and yet the most beautiful part of the pass would be seen.

From Trafoi, Meran can be reached by carriage road in a day of moderate length, and Botzen in a long one; we chose the latter course for the reasons I

have already mentioned, and merely stopped at Meran to dine while the horses rested. We had intended going out to see the town, the situation of which seems very well chosen, but in the middle of the day the glare and heat were so intense that we had not courage to face them, and remained sitting with closed jalousies within the hotel.

It was curious, as we drove later in the day down the valley, to remark how, almost without perceiving it, we had glided into the vegetation, the atmosphere, and the climate of the south. We had exchanged the pine and the larch for the chestnut tree and the vine, the green Alp for the field of maize, and the wooden châlet of the mountain for the flat-roofed house of the plain. Occasional glimpses of snowy peaks still revealed themselves now and then through the opening of some side valley, as if to cheer us with the thought that, though often unseen, they were not yet far off; but the character of the scene was completely changed. We had left the wild, untamed Alpine world for the civilised regions of the earth; everything looked neat and orderly, the maize grew in straight rows, the hemp in even squares, the stones had been collected and built into tidy walls; nothing was allowed to have its own way; even the vine was trained into precise cross-bars over its wooden trellis-work, lest in the luxuriance of life and growth one of its graceful festoons should stray

beyond the boundaries of property and encroach upon its neighbour.

Of course this is all quite right, and as it should be, and the spectacle of an untidy garden or farm is one that can give no pleasure; yet I fancy that on most people the sudden return from the perfect freedom of the mountain regions to the artificial world in which we live produces at first a slight shock, and the wild portion of our nature asserts itself for an instant through all the conventionalities which custom and education have woven into the tissue of our daily lives. Certainly, as we drove that evening through the paved and lighted streets of Botzen, it was a comfort to me to think that in a few days we should again be back among the mountains, and, sitting on some mossy stone, might watch the last faint rose of the after-glow fade from their snow-clad heights.

All the same, though it is very well to have fine feelings about the sunset, as we linger watching it from the mountain side, it must be allowed, on the other hand, that civilisation, with all its trammels, has its advantages too, and at the end of a long journey a comfortable, well-appointed hotel possesses charms in the eyes of the wearied traveller. What sight, for instance, when one is very hungry, can be much more pleasant than a white, glossy table-cloth on which glass, silver, and china are symmetrically

laid, while an attentive waiter approaches, tray in hand, bearing the substantials of the feast? Where is the enthusiastic lover of the Alps who would just at that moment exchange the field of damask for the field of snow, the glasses for *séracs*, the plates for slabs of rock, and the waiter with his burden for a guide with an ice-axe? Not to speak of the pleasant variety which a large, lofty bedroom, with a comfortable spring bed and a well-cushioned sofa, affords to those who have been roughing it for some time on couches of chaff and seats of wood in the high Alps.

Chapter VIII.

THE HOCHNARR AND THE PFANDELSCHARTE.

Besides the luxuries enumerated at the end of the last chapter, all of which the hotel Kaiser Krone at Botzen affords, we had in addition a beautiful view from the windows of our rooms, and from there we beheld for the first time a small portion of that celebrated group of Dolomite mountains which, for a long period almost unknown, are now attracting an ever increasing stream of tourists into Southern Tirol and Carinthia. For a time we, too, had thought of following the general direction, and had oscillated to and fro between the Gross Glockner and Dolomite ranges, but at last the peaks of snow carried the day over the peaks of rock, and leaving the wonders of the Ampezzo pass for another year, we turned our steps northwards towards those vast chains extending from near Innsbrück into far Styria, of which, compared with the Swiss Alps, so little is yet generally known.

Leaving Botzen by rail we followed the line of the Brenner as far as Franzensfeste, and from that station, after a change of carriages and a pause of about an hour, we turned to the right, crossed a very fine bridge, and passing almost through the fort we entered upon that new line of rail which has been opened within the last few years, and which, bearing continuously in an eastern direction, connects the pass of the Brenner and the western districts of Tirol with the capital of Austria.

The portion of this railway over which we passed mounts for the most part through a long and very interesting valley, the Pusterthal, till at a remarkably slight elevation the watershed is passed, after which the road descends gently along the banks of the Drave to the small town of Lienz. This being the place of our destination, forms also the limit to my knowledge of this newly made line, but if the remainder of the scenery it presents be as fine as that through which we passed, it is one well deserving of notice, and very superior in this respect to the generality of railways, by which a journey is so often monotonous and uninteresting.

All the way from Franzensfeste to Lienz we were kept in a perpetual state of excitement by the sudden appearance here and there in unexpected places of most extraordinary Dolomite peaks, which went on increasing in extravagance of shape till they culmi-

nated in the Dreischuster Spitz, the most impossible looking mountain I have ever beheld.

They are strange rocks, these Dolomites, raising their pale, ghostly forms on the distant horizon, or rising in sharp, hard outlines against the nearer sky, and the first feeling experienced on gazing at them is one of unmixed wonder at their fantastic shapes. Darting their forked tongues into the heavens, one could almost fancy them flames that once had glowed warm and bright, but that some resistless power had petrified, long ages ago, into the stillness of their present repose, leaving them but the ashy monuments of what they once were. I know that to many these mountains appear beautiful and attractive, and that they can draw admirers year after year within their magic circle, to look with increased fascination at their weird forms, but on my mind they never could produce a feeling of pleasure. They are odd, surprising, sensational to the highest degree, but they lack the charms of symmetry, dignity, and gracefulness; they are too hard, too bold, too sharp; they tire the eye with their unnatural contortions, and chill the spirits with their lifelessness. It is a vision of dry bones in the valley, and involuntarily as one gazes the unexpressed longing rises within, that the winds of heaven should breathe on and vivify their arid heights, that the word should go forth to clothe their skeleton forms with the soft roundness of the snow, to fill the hollows of

their gaunt sides with the deep blue of the glacier, and to break the awful silence of their solitude with the laughter of the mountain stream.

I am perhaps forming an opinion too rapidly, and without sufficient experience of this peculiar kind of scenery; it may be that with familiarity its oddities become less apparent, and that the eye, no longer startled by that part of its character, which an Alpine writer of the day has so aptly named 'grotesque,' finds beauties in the surroundings which before were unnoticed. It may be also that had I penetrated into the heart of the range and seen the now famous lions of the chain, had I looked on the massive fortress of the Pelmo, the triple rocks of the Drei Zinnen, the bold peak of the Cimon, or seen the snow-clad Antelao or Civetta, I might retract all I have written, and go over inconsistently to swell the ranks of their admirers. I only give my first impressions of those rocks which I saw, and first impressions, though often subsequently modified, are in the main usually true.

Lienz possesses a fair inn, and is a pretty little town, almost surrounded by mountains; there we spent the night, and rather surprised the waitress by calling in the evening for coffee and bread and butter. Evidently it was not the thing to take at that hour, and she considered us *de l'autre monde*, but she said reflectively that she would make us some coffee, and that we could have bread also, but butter was quite

out of the question. Why? we asked, had they none in the house? Oh no! she answered, of course not in the evening; morning was the time for butter. We ought to have called for beer, as we perceived by watching the Germans who came into the *salle*, but not feeling inclined for that fashionable beverage we braved public opinion and had our coffee, which was brought in a jug and laid as at Sulden, on a black cloth over the white one, but which after all was hot and not badly made.

Our next stage from Lienz was to be Heiligenblut. How were we to get there? By a *char* road all the way, we were told. This sounded very comfortable, so we ordered an *Einspanner* and started early the next morning.

For about an hour all went well; the vehicle was not bad, the horse good, and the road smooth; but at the end of that time we drove into a small village, and here came a change in our circumstances, and we went considerably down in the world. A carriage with springs could go no further, they told us; we must get out of this one and continue our journey in a country cart. This was discouraging, but there was no help for it; a rough-looking machine was produced with two wooden benches across it, one for us and one for the guide and the driver; a bullock hide was thrown over ours, we scrambled up to it and off we went. We had made up our minds to a reasonable amount of jolting, but not to what followed. It

was the most dislocating process I have ever gone through, and after bearing it for some time I asked the driver if the road would not soon improve.

'Improve!' he exclaimed triumphantly, 'it will soon get much worse.'

He seemed quite proud of it, and it actually did get worse, a fact of which I at first doubted the possibility. We were knocked to one side and then to the other, jerked up into the air and flung down again, and shaken so violently that I felt my brain beginning to get quite queer and unsettled. Conversation had latterly been impracticable, but I managed to remark in a spasmodic manner to my sister that I thought I should soon go mad, and she answered disjointedly that she felt in a bad way too, so we had the abominable instrument of torture stopped, and much against our coachman's will got out and walked most of the way to Winklern, our halting-place for the middle of the day.

We had now left Tirolese ground and entered Carinthia, but except for the change of name it seemed to make no difference, the houses, the costume of the inhabitants, and the customs appearing to be identical in both districts.

It was harvest time when we passed, and we observed that a peculiar and not a bad invention is made use of for drying the corn. At intervals all along the farms tall wooden erections were to be seen very much resembling immense horses for drying

clothes, and on these they hang the sheaves of wheat, which thus spread out and exposed to both wind and sun, probably dry quicker than in stooks as we have them.

Another but not at all a commendable custom, which they follow in this country, is that of having all one-horse vehicles furnished with a pole instead of shafts. The effect of the horse harnessed to one side is most awkward, and at first, thinking it was a mistake, Amrhein remonstrated at our being given a carriage intended for a pair, but the driver informed him, as indeed we afterwards saw, that this is always the case, and he added in a superior manner that people who put one horse in shafts know nothing about it, and that theirs is the right way and has great advantages. Who benefits by these advantages we never could make out; not the poor animal at any rate, who, whenever it stops or goes down hill, gets constant knocks on the side of its head from the pole, and certainly not those who sit in the carriage, which, crab-fashion, seems inclined to go sideways and is always being pulled straight with an unpleasant jerk.

At Winklern the road improved considerably and we returned to the luxury of an *Einspanner* with springs. The drive from Lienz, mostly through a pine forest, had been exceedingly pretty, and when we had got on our feet and had sufficiently recovered ourselves, we had been able to turn round from time

to time to admire the fine glimpses to be caught through the trees of the Dolomite Mountains to the south, but after passing Winklern these are lost, and in compensation the valley opens northwards and the white summits of the High Tauern range begin to make their appearance. For some time we looked out anxiously for the first sight of the Gross Glockner, but the drive was longer than we had anticipated, and our horse was none of the fleetest, so that to our disappointment the evening closed in before we reached the point from which this beautiful mountain first becomes visible.

It was quite dark as we wearily toiled up the long final ascent to Heiligenblut, and pulled up before the entrance of its only hotel. A flood of light streamed out from the open doorway, and, in dark relief against it, the figure of a woman was seen standing on the threshold, while a shrill German voice saluted us with the inhospitable words,

'There is no use in your coming here, you can't get in.'

'Oh!' said Amrhein, jumping down, 'these ladies want two bed-rooms.'

'Two bed-rooms indeed! They can't have one. There is no room for you.'

'But they must have one room.'

'But I tell you they can't. There is not a spot empty. Why did you come so late?'

'And do you think we are going to turn back and

go away in the dark?' retorted Amrhein, beginning to get irritated.

'Well, you see, you should have come sooner, and then you would have got in,' replied the landlady; but though her words still continued to be unfavourable, there was a slight tone of relenting in her voice, and, encouraged by it, our guide opened the carriage-door and handed us out before her. This was a wise move, and helped towards the discomfiture of our reluctant hostess.

'You know I have no room for you,' she said, more mildly; 'I told you so at once. You should not have come so late—but perhaps the *Herr Pfarrer* could take you in for the night.'

Here was an unexpected gleam of sunshine over the gloom of our prospects, and we said eagerly that we hoped he would.

'Well, then,' said the landlady, 'you can try;' and, calling a girl from the hotel, she told her to direct us to the priest's house, and to ask if he could accommodate us. 'And if he does,' she added, condescendingly, 'you may come here for your meals.'

With this chance of board and lodging, we started hopefully for the *Herr Pfarrer's* house close by, where we were received in quite a friendly manner by his fat, good-humoured looking housekeeper, and shown up to a good-sized bedroom, tidily furnished, and scrupulously clean. We had come out of the difficulty better than at one time we could have ventured

to hope, and, relieved and victorious, we proceeded to establish ourselves on the territory won.

In this room we were allowed to remain during our stay at Heiligenblut, and it being clean and comfortable, and the house very quiet; we were far better off than had we been located in the hotel. In many Alpine villages a room can thus be hired at the house of the parish priest, and this resource is a great convenience to the traveller in places where the accommodation at the inn is either very defective or very limited. Certainly on this occasion we were most thankful for the harbour of refuge thus afforded us, and it was with a delightful feeling of possession that we inspected our apartment.

It contained, besides the usual bedroom furniture, including two pie-dishes for washing, an odd mixture of objects, sacred and secular. There was a large press, locked, on the top of which stood the model of a church, executed in shells, and several glass jars, ornamented with sacred devices; beyond these, in a dark corner, hung some long white objects, which we concluded at first to be vestments belonging to M. le Curé, but which on nearer approach proved of a decidedly lay character, being simply some of the housekeeper's petticoats. Various portraits of saints hung in conspicuous places round the walls, while, hiding her charms behind a large stove, was the picture of a pretty and worldly-looking young lady playing the guitar. She had probably been placed

in this obscure retreat, being considered unfit company for the good people in the front, or else it was an allegory, and intended to teach that mere earthly beauty is unimportant, and should be kept in the background, while virtues should be exalted and brought prominently forward.

Having made this 'voyage autour de ma chambre,' we availed ourselves of the landlady's kind invitation, and groped our way back to the hotel in search of a supper. Passing through the hall, we entered a room over the door of which *Speisesaal* was written, expecting it of course to present the usual appearance of such places. A queer sight met our eyes; it was more like a distant view of Manchester than anything I can think of; a dense yellowish fog pervaded the room, and looming here and there through the murky atmosphere rose many dark forms that might have been taken for chimneys, out of whose tops volumes of smoke were from time to time emitted. A stifling smell of bad tobacco saluted our nostrils, and judging by these indisputable signs, we came to the conclusion that in this smoky den many German gentlemen must be enjoying themselves after the manner of their country, with pipes and beer.

To have our supper in such society we felt to be impossible, so, appealing to the landlady, who by this time had become quite gracious to us, we asked if there were any other place where we could take it. Of course there was, she said; we could have it in

the *salon* upstairs. A *salon* upstairs! This was a degree of civilisation we had never expected, and we delightedly acquiesced to the proposal.

'Then,' said our hostess, calling a very dirty-looking girl; 'take a table, and show these ladies upstairs, and you can get two chairs.'

This young lady seized a table, and, whisking it with great agility on to her head, preceded us up a flight of crooked stairs to the passage on the first floor; here she deposited her burden, added a candle and two chairs, and retired, and then it slowly dawned upon us that we were in the *salon*. This landing was not particularly clean, and it was certainly anything rather than sweet; however, we were thankful to take refuge in it from the horrors below, and while we remained at Heiligenblut our table and chairs were left there, and we had a sort of acknowledged right to the place.

Presently our unkempt attendant returned with the further luxury of a dirty tablecloth, and not long after the supper followed. This was by no means so bad as might have been expected, and I must say we found, in the small hotels of Tirol and Carinthia, as a rule, better cooking and greater plenty than are usually to be met with in Swiss inns of the same class.

Warned by our failure at Sulden from want of a local guide, we had determined to begin at Heiligenblut by the other end; there we first chose our

mountain, and then sought for our man; here we proposed finding the man first and then choosing the mountain. We had accordingly told Amrhein to go at once to the *bureau* and look for a guide who could be well recommended. The *bureau* turned out to be a figure of speech; at least its locality could never be found, but there really was a *guide-chef*, and after supper Amrhein entered the *salon* with a face of ill-disguised amusement, to announce that this authority was coming in person to speak to us. With this preface he drew aside, and a queer little figure stepped from behind him on the scene. He had no coat on, and was dressed in the usual rather scanty costume of the country, which gives one the idea, at first sight, that the individual is still wearing, as a full-grown man, the clothes which he got as a small boy, and to which no provident mother had ever made any addition as his length increased; his hair was cut very short behind and left long in front, and he held in his hand a pipe, which I must do him the justice to say he did not smoke while with us. He was altogether a most ambiguous-looking personage; he might have been a goatherd, or he might have been a beggarman, and he was not unlike an Irish pig-driver. He came forward, however, smiling and bowing, and we understood that we were in the presence of the *guide-chef* of Heiligenblut. He was cheerful or the subject of guides, had a good one disengaged

for the next morning, and showed us his name among those of the first-class guides on the printed list.

This point satisfactorily settled, we turned our attention to the mountains. Having made a deep study of that part of Mr. Ball's 'Eastern Alps' relating to the Gross Glockner district, I was by this time pretty well acquainted with its principal peaks. The Gross Glockner itself was beyond our powers; besides, its ascent required two days, and the intervening night had to be passed in a most uncomfortable hut on hay, but the Johannisberg seemed to be more feasible, and I suggested it first to this Alpine chief. He was most discouraging. It never would do for ladies! It took eighteen hours. It required two days. It was altogether not to be thought of.

I must interrupt myself here to explain that the vexed question of the rights of women has evidently as yet made little or no progress among the inhabitants of these remote districts; they want some strong-minded female orator to go and hold forth to them on the capabilities of the sex. At any rate, as far as mountaineering goes, they look down on womankind with the utmost contempt, and limited as are the female powers in that line, they are certainly underrated by the guides of Heiligenblut. A lady, therefore, need not be too much discouraged by the difficulties she is threatened

with, and may feel pretty sure that they will prove less than they are represented to be.

To return to our interview; when the Johannisberg plan fell to the ground, I inquired about the Bärenkopf; but this was pooh-poohed also, as too much for us, so I fell back on the Fuscher Kahrkopf, a mountain nearly 11,000 feet in height, rising opposite the Gross Glockner, directly over the great Pasterze glacier, and which must from its position present a magnificent view. I have since found out that we could easily have ascended it in a day, and that it must be one of the most charming of the moderate excursions from the place, but the *guide-chef* declared that it was also beyond our capabilities, and we foolishly believed him.

All our proposals having been negatived, we next told him to suggest something, and he mentioned one or two very trifling expeditions, which we, in our turn, having declined, he was driven to a compromise, and offered the Hochnarr.

Now, it had so happened that on looking beforehand over the names of this range, there were two mountains, the Spilmann and the Hochnarr, which my sister and I had declared, laughing, that we should never ascend; the first from its ominous sounding, and the second from its foolish appellation, and here was one of them being handed up to us. The Hochnarr was, however, not to be despised; it was a fair-sized mountain, celebrated for its pano-

ramie view; and after all, 'What's in a name?' we reasoned; so after some further consultation I said, condescendingly, that I thought it would do, and inquired how long it would take.

'Thirteen hours,' said the *guide-chef*, severely.

Thirteen hours! And it was not far off, and not much higher than the Titlis. I asked him again if he was quite sure that it would take such a long time.

'I only hope,' he answered, flourishing his pipe impressively at me, 'that you will be able to do it in that time. I only hope that you will be able to be back before dark.'

Notwithstanding this discouraging suggestion we closed with the offer, and I decided [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

'Well,' said the little man, looking up doubtfully at our tall, active guide, 'I am very much afraid you won't be strong enough.'

But we were all laughing so much by this time, that he did not press the subject further, and the next day was fixed on for the great ascent.

The following morning, descending in the early dawn from the steps of the *Herr Pfarrer's* house, I had my first sight of the Gross Glockner. Clear and soft against the morning sky rose the fair outline of the celebrated mountain, its snowy, spire-like summit, tinged by the half light with pearly grey, forming a beautiful and delicate contrast to the first faint blush of palest pink that was slowly deepening in the heavens behind it. Seen by any light the Gross Glockner must always be admired, but I do not think a more favourable moment could have been chosen for a first view of it, than that short and transitory period between the dawn and the day, when colours are but faintly revealed, and distant objects seem almost unreal in their soft indistinctness. Further back, and much lower than the Gross Glockner, is seen a rounded dome of snow, which, by its contrasting shape, gives still more dignity to the pointed pyramid of the great mountain. It is, I believe, the Johannisberg, but I received so many contradictory answers to my questions on the subject, that I state its name hesitatingly, and with strong doubts of my own truthfulness.

The fact is, that all round this district there is much confusion, and apparently a most unfair division in the nomenclature of the mountains, and

while one peak rejoices like a royal prince in a multiplicity of names, on the other hand several are to be found with only one name among them. There are in the neighbourhood of Heiligenblut, for instance, no less than four mountains called the Bärenkopf; three of them, like their namesakes in the famous fairy tale, being distinguished by the epithets of 'big, middle-sized, and little,' while the fourth bear's head has no prefix. These alone are enough to cause much perplexity to the inquiring stranger, and besides, I suspect that when any of the natives are at a loss for the name of a mountain, they glibly announce it to be the Bärenkopf, on the fourfold chance of its really being one of the peaks so called.

[illegible] made the acquaintance of our local guide. His name was Bauerle; he was a middle-aged man, and proved to be quiet and good tempered, and by no means a bad guide, though [illegible] Austria seem very inferior to those of Switzerland, Savoy, or Piedmont. He wore the usual Highland costume of the country, and carried no ice axe, only an alpenstock of the fairy length, armed at the end with a good bad spike; he had however a pair of *crampons* slung to his knapsack. We asked him if he never used an ice axe, but he said not, that when the snow was hard he put on the *crampons*. As he was one of the Gross Glockner guides, this seemed

strange, for one would suppose it to be impossible to ascend that rather difficult mountain without some step-cutting being necessary; however, the guides of these districts are not, I believe, considered by competent judges to be good either on snow or ice.

The first part of the ascent of the Hochnarr is particularly easy, and anyone wishing to ride part of the way could do so, as there is for some time a good bridle path; further on it becomes steeper and only fit for pedestrians, but still there is no difficulty. About half-way up the mountain some strongly-built stone huts are passed, used by workmen employed on the gold mines, which lie not far off, on the ridge connecting the valley of Heiligenblut with that of Rauris. Beyond these the path reaches a very lonely and picturesque lake, called the Zirmersee, 8,600 feet above the level of the sea; steep rocks descend into it on all sides, and their reflection and that of the snow above them is singularly distinct in its placid waters. From this point there is a climb of 2,000 feet, partly on *débris* and shattered rock; but we left them whenever we could, and took to the snow slopes, which though rather steep, were very pleasant, the snow being in perfect order.

In five hours from Heiligenblut we stood on the summit, but unfortunately, while we were ascending a marplot cloud had descended, and we met on the

top, where it remained, an unwelcome guest, always spoiling and at times almost blotting out the view; we heard afterwards that down at Heiligenblut the sky had been clear all day. We remained for some time on the highest point, trying through the driving mist to catch occasional glimpses of the various high peaks of the Tauern chain, but at last we had to give up the effort in despair, and to leave without having got a satisfactory sight of the whole.

On the way down Bäuerle's low opinion of ladies' mountaineering powers became very apparent. On every steep place he evidently expected me to make a scene, and kept constantly observing to our guide that he was afraid I should be giddy. It was [illegible] vain to assure him that he might be easy on that point; he did not believe us, and when in one place [illegible] and observed that he never thought a lady could have done it. Now, as the extent of my performance had been to give a hand to each of these men and let myself slide down between them, it will be per-

ceived how very low must have been his estimate of female excellence.

Further down we stopped to see the gold works connected with the mine, which are carried on in two separate houses, the machinery being worked by water power. The lumps of clay containing the precious metal are brought down in sledges from the mines above, and are in the first house crushed into quite fine dust; this being mixed with water flows through large tubes to the second house, where in the form of mud it is spread out on large trays, and shaken slowly backwards and forwards, still by machinery, till a great proportion of the earth is washed away into troughs below, and the metals, gold and lead, are left in a comparatively pure state behind. They are then scraped off the trays by the workmen, and are sent away to some furnaces at a distance, where they go through the further process of smelting.

The mines belong, I believe, to the Austrian Government, and are worked summer and winter. The miners live in huts close by, and are, we were told, paid only about two francs a day, which seems but a small remuneration for the hardships which they must undergo, remaining at such an elevation during the winter months. There are also dangers to be encountered from the fall of avalanches in the spring. We passed a ruined hut which had been destroyed some years before by one; it contained

two men at the time of the accident, one of whom was killed on the spot, and the other, strange to say, escaped unhurt.

We stayed for nearly an hour inspecting these interesting works, and then continuing our descent we reached Heiligenblut after an absence of a little more than ten hours; had we not lingered at the gold mines we could easily have made the excursion in nine hours and a half. I only mention this in order to show how very much the *guide-chef* had exaggerated the length of the expedition. No lady, as far as I could make out, had ever been up the Hochnarr before, which seems strange, if true, as it is an easy and very nice mountain, and the view from the top must in clear weather be exceedingly fine.

which the architect had added later as an after thought than like what it ought to be, the principal part of the building. Its ugliness is made still more

apparent by the addition of a thick coat of white-wash.

As headquarters for alpine expeditions, Heiligenblut has the very serious disadvantage of being too far off from the great mountains of the range; but this disqualification could easily be removed, and were it in Switzerland or Savoy, some enterprising individual would long ago have erected a neat little mountain inn two or three hours further up the valley, within sight of the magnificent Pasterze glacier, and within reach of the many beautiful excursions in that direction. Were this done, and were the hotel in the village made a little more comfortable, it would be a charming Alpine station, and no doubt the number of English tourists, now very limited, would much increase in the place; in its present condition it is too rough and dirty to pay it more than a passing visit.

We had decided to walk over to Fuscherbad next day by the fine pass of the Pfandelscharte, but the evening did not promise well, and the priest's housekeeper did her best to dissuade us from going. She told some appalling anecdotes of people being frozen to death, and of others falling up to their eyes, as she expressed it, into crevasses and being extricated with much difficulty, and said that the pass we were going to attempt was very dangerous, and that we had better try a lower one; but by this time we were up to the ways of the place, and listened com-

posedly to all these horrors. Later in the evening the *Herr Pfarrer*, who had been very kind to us, but who evidently disapproved of ladies mountaineering, spoke to Amrhein, and said that he considered it his, the guide's, duty to prepare us for the dangers we might encounter should the weather break; but in spite of all these well-meant warnings we pinned our faith on Mr. Ball, who in his 'Alpine Guide,' describing this col, writes, 'With moderate care, there is neither risk nor difficulty in the passage,' and we held to our determination and started the next morning.

Could we have managed it, no doubt it would have been far better to have waited for fine weather in order to enjoy thoroughly the beauties of this much [illegible] pass, but our time was now so limited that we could not afford a delay any longer. We took [illegible] to show the way, and a porter to carry our luggage, and both these men tried also to persuade us to give up the Pfandelscharte, and to go by the Fenster pass, saying that the glacier was [illegible] and that it was sure to come on to snow [illegible] we got there.

This statement, as it turned out, was perfectly absurd. The Schneelücken glacier was easy and particularly smooth, and the largest crevasses we passed were scarcely, if at all, more than two feet wide. We were exactly half an hour on the ice, so that in no weather could we possibly have had time

to be frozen, and there was a well-marked track all across it, so that even in a fog we could not have lost our way.

I do not mention all this in order to injure Bäuerle, who, as I have said before, we found very good-tempered and anxious to please, and who as a guide seemed to know what he was about, but merely to show how little dependence can be placed on anything one hears in these localities, and how necessary it is to have a reliable guide book, by which to regulate one's movements.

The morning was dull when we left Heiligenblut, but we hoped for an improvement, and tried to persuade ourselves that it was coming. Soon, however, the rain began to fall, at first very slightly, but rapidly increasing in heaviness till it reached the degree of a shower-bath. This downpour was too violent to continue long, so we took refuge in a small chapel, and there waited to see what turn matters would take. The Heiligenblut men put on solemn faces and threatened us with snow, and the clouds certainly did not look very unlike it, but fortunately none came, and after near an hour of rain the sky began to clear, and we pursued our upward way. The sun had come out by the time we reached the foot of the Pasterze glacier, and we were able to see and admire its very fine ice-fall; but the summits of the mountains were seldom visible, and the day was so doubtful that we feared to make the usual *détour*

to the Johannishütte, so that unfortunately we missed the best view of the glacier, and did not see all this fine scenery to advantage.

Nothing can well be more trying to a pedestrian than to make one of these celebrated passes in bad weather. He has probably read and heard a good deal about it beforehand, and has anticipated much enjoyment during the walk; blue skies above, crisp snow and ice beneath, lovely views to excite the feelings, fresh breezes to cool the brow, and shady spots on which to rest by the way. Things go so smoothly in imagination, and castle-building, of whatever style the architecture be, proceeds without check or hindrance on its airy foundations. Then perhaps the reality comes in stern contrast to its florid predecessor, and we have difficulty in tracing any likeness of the actual building, hard, cold, and grey to the [illegible] sad cast before.

[illegible]

circumstances, and thankfully glean what small

straws of comfort we could find scattered here and there on our road.

Good and evil are strangely mixed both in great things and small in this world of ours, and as there is no rose without its thorn, so there is no thorn or briar of which some leaf or flower does not enliven the stem. Even a wet day in the Alps has at times its fine effects, its sudden rifts in the rolling clouds, its unexpected gleams of sunshine darting through the surrounding gloom, its momentary clearings of the mist, and its wondrous glimpses of stupendous peaks, of which the lofty fragments, seen but for a moment in the upper air, seem scarcely to belong to our earth, and we had to content ourselves with a few such stray visions, and turn our backs on the great Pasterze glacier to pursue our way to the col of the Pfandelscharte.

Short and easy snow slopes lead to the top, and then on the other side comes the passage of the much maligned Schartenkees glacier. This accomplished, the path descends rapidly to the Fuscherthal, the head of which valley presents extremely grand scenery. Tremendous precipices descend into it in all directions, over whose brink innumerable torrents leap, streaking the dark rocks with their delicate lines of spray, while about half way up this vast barrier, on the day that we saw it, lay a long, heavy bank of cloud, above the surface of which rose some of the snowy crests of the great mountains, appear-

ing, as is always the case, still higher as they emerged from their surroundings of mist and fog. Prominent among these was the Wiesbachhorn, in height, I believe, the third peak of the range, but otherwise very inferior to the Gross Glockner, which in beauty, as in size, reigns supreme over the whole chain.

Further down the valley the village of Ferleiten is passed, and then, leaving the road, a very pretty path can be taken, which, mounting through a forest, leads in about two hours to Fuscherbad, also called the Baths of St. Wolfgang. Were the day fine, the last part, on a good path, and in shade, would be a very pleasant ending to the expedition, but with us it was otherwise. The rain, which for some time past had held out dark threats over our heads, now set about to prove that they were by no means empty ones; nor were the clouds empty either, as, without ever appearing to decrease, they poured an unceasing torrent upon us, till, drenched and muddy, we reached the welcome shelter of Fuscherbad.

Chapter IX.

THE SCHWARZKOPF AND THE STEINERNE MEER.

Judging by the accommodation at Heiligenblut, our hopes of Fuscherbad had not soared high; we were therefore most agreeably surprised by the superiority of this latter place. It can scarcely be called a village, but is rather a small group of hotels surrounding a little chapel, very prettily situated in the midst of green meadows and fine trees, through which pleasant paths have been made for the benefit of the patients who frequent the place. At the nearest of these houses we stopped, and found it, though unpretending, to be exceedingly clean and comfortable, and the owners very civil and friendly. It belongs to a very old man, who in his day was, we were told, one of the best guides of the district. Although past eighty, his memory seemed most retentive, and he spoke with perfect clearness of all the mountains and passes of the neighbourhood, though many years must have elapsed since he could

have been on any of them. His daughters keep the hotel and attend on the visitors.

These good people appeared quite pleased to receive us, a degree of hospitality I could not help wondering at, for a more miserable looking pair cannot often have come to their doors. We were dripping from head to foot, and wherever we stood streams of black mud poured off us on to their nice clean floors; we really felt quite ashamed of ourselves and with the national British cry for water and baths we retired hastily to our own rooms.

It is an undeniable fact, though one perhaps humiliating to the human race, that outward appearance should so much depend on dress. Take for example an extreme case from fiction. Cinderella in rags by the kitchen fire, and Cinderella in satin dancing with the Prince was one and the same person, and yet how different the effect produced! Probably had the Prince wandered by accident into the aforesaid kitchen and surprised his fair one cleaning a saucepan he might not at first sight have distinguished her from the kitchen-maid, but when her fairy god-mother had dressed her up to advantage he admired her very much indeed and made her a Princess. In every-day life the contrasts are not so strongly marked, the repulsiveness is less striking, the climax less brilliant, but in a degree the rule holds good; examples may be seen of it from time to time, and nowhere oftener than at mountain inns

in bad weather, where wet and travel-stained tourists arriving and tidy guests descending to table d'hôte have gone through transformation scenes of their own, which are only not sensational because not instantaneous.

In spite of the disturbed state of our feelings when we made our objectionable entry, we still had retained sufficient presence of mind to order our dinner before we retired from sight, and having reappeared later under more favourable circumstances we found that meal ready to be partaken of. It was a funny dinner on the whole; the component parts were all good separately, only they were oddly put together. First we had soup, then veal cutlets with stewed peaches, after which there came chicken fried in batter accompanied by a bowl of cold white syrup with an unknown substance like seaweed floating about it. A very large pancake completed the repast, which was by no means bad though queerly combined.

It is the custom in Carinthia to furnish the visitors with a list every morning of the food consumed by them on the preceding day; the prices are affixed to this document and the minutest particulars, even to the number of rolls provided, are all entered into. No one is expected to pay at the moment, it is merely for the information of the eaters, and the amount of each list will be added together and appear as a whole in the final bill. It may be a

satisfactory but I think it a tiresome custom. Every article of food is portioned out with the strictest regularity, and sometimes in very small quantities, and if you venture to call for any addition, even to a little more milk for your coffee, you know that this trifling indulgence will be duly registered against you in your list next morning, and that you will have to pay some kreuzers for the excess you have committed. It is not that one grudges the small sum charged, but it seems to me that the usual plan is the pleasantest; to pay a stated sum for one's meals and to eat much or little of them as one feels inclined.

Vegetables are not apparently a common article of food in these places, and when on ordering our dinner the next day we suggested to our pleasant-looking hostess that we should prefer some to preserves along with the meat, she seemed puzzled at the request, and said that she would try and get potatoes for us, but the demand was an innovation and I am sure upset her ideas. She seemed most anxious to please us, and waxed quite eloquent over the description of our future dinner, all of which I completely forget now, with the exception of the last item, the account of which rather awed us.

'I will make you such a nice pudding to-day,' she said cheerfully, 'a French pudding.' So we smiled and looked gracious. 'Oh, yes!' she continued, 'I know you will like it, it will be quite black!'

In deference to her evident desire to give satisfaction, we restrained the expression of our countenances and let no trace of disapproval appear on them, but when the time came we felt uneasy at the promised delicacy, knowing that out of politeness we should have to swallow some of it. It proved however not so bad as it was represented, and though decidedly not of French extraction, yet if it originated in the brain of the landlady it did credit to her powers of invention.

The day after our arrival was spent in wandering about the pretty grounds which surround the establishment. The largest of the hotels contains I fancy the baths for all the patients, and the waters can be taken at two fountains close by. They are said to be efficacious in some disorders, but their mineral properties can be but slight, as they are perfectly tasteless and still; a great contrast in this respect to those of Sta. Caterina, which are strongly impregnated with iron, and very sparkling. We saw few strangers about, and the inhabitants complained much of the badness of their season, owing to the constant rain and inclement weather.

We were fortunate during our stay, as we had two fine days which we much enjoyed in this pleasant little place; but as an Alpine station it possesses the same faults as Heiligenblut, only in a greater degree, being still further off than that village from the principal mountains of the chain.

The ascent of the Wiesbachhorn, though possible from the Fuscherthal, is much more difficult than from a valley on the other side of it, and the other and easier mountains in that direction could not be accomplished in one day from Fuscherbad, at least not when we were there, during the last days of August, when already the mornings and evenings were beginning to shorten sensibly; in taking any of these excursions, it is almost always necessary to descend to Ferleiten, and make it the starting point. Added to these disadvantages, it would appear, from what we heard, that there are at present no good guides in the neighbourhood, and that anyone wishing to do much in the Alpine way, would have either to bring or import a guide from Heiligenblut.

To the back of Fuscherbad, there are several mountains, but they are all inconsiderable, the highest among them being the Schwarzkopf, 9,072 feet, which having nothing better to do I settled that I. would amuse myself with the ascent of, on the second day of our stay at these baths.

As usual great things were told of its difficulties, and ladies were cautioned against undertaking it unadvisedly, but without heeding these observations, I started for it early the next morning, accompanied by our guide, and with a young man from the hotel to show the way. The ascent was through trees and pastures till we reached a small lake, one shore of which was composed of avalanche snow, that had

solidified into almost the consistency of ice, looking very pretty where its blue edge descended in miniature cliffs into the still waters.

From this point two paths lead to the summit, and here the inferiority of womankind was again made painfully evident; while the direct route is reserved for the gentlemen, the ladies are sent by a long roundabout way, which requires an additional hour and much circumlocution before the desired goal is attained.

'They have not head for the short way,' explained the Fuscherbad youth in an off-hand manner.

By this time I was getting so accustomed to be considered utterly incompetent on a mountain, that I was preparing to follow humbly on the prescribed path, when to my no small amusement, Amrhein rose against the injustice of the proceeding.

'Why should we be obliged to go round there,' he reasoned, 'when we can get up much quicker here? We'll not go the ladies' way one bit, we'll keep with the gentlemen.'

And so we did, and though rather steep and rough, it presented no difficulty whatever, and only required step-cutting up one short slope. The top of the mountain is composed of shattered rock, and is, I should think, in its ordinary state, free from snow, but on this occasion a good deal had lately fallen, and some caution in walking was necessary, as its soft surface often gave way under the feet,

and there was the danger of being hurt by the sharp edges of the great stones beneath.

The day was bright and cloudless, and the view all round very fine. To the south lay the High Tauern range, which owing to mist, we had seen very imperfectly from the Hochnarr, but of which now every peak was revealed, while to the north, the horizon was bounded by an entirely new set of mountains, of whose existence I had known little or nothing before. In strong contrast to the snow-clad Tauern Alps, this enormous stony barrier extends in one unbroken line of rock from west to east, as far as the eye can follow it.

It seems strange that a chain, which though never attaining any great height, is yet so important from its immense length, should apparently have no name, but nevertheless I could not make out that it possessed one. It is talked of locally as the Steinerne Meer, though in reality that is only a small portion of it, and one not seen from any distance; the Ewige Schnee is a name also given to some parts of it, but as only a few patches of snow cling here and there to its precipitous sides, that name would be inappropriate to apply to the whole. Its highest summits range from about 8,000 to 9,000 feet, and are composed of very steep, barren rocks, chiefly I believe limestone, but they are very light in color, and at a distance, have more resemblance to the pale hue of the Dolomite formation.

Though not very beautiful, there is yet something exceedingly imposing in the effect of this vast wall, looking like the mighty outwork of some gigantic fortress, and the interest with which I gazed on it was no doubt heightened by the consideration that over this very rampart lay our future path to the Königsee. There is a defile more to the west, through which a carriage-road has been made, but we had decided to avoid the tame proceeding of driving round, and instead to take the bolder and shorter course of walking over the chain, and thus to descend at once to the shores of the Bavarian lake.

This was to be our last Alpine pass for the year, and I must say that, seen from the summit of the Schwarzkopf, it did not look particularly inviting. It seemed hopeless to expect that we should ever be able to crawl up that straight wall; but rock-climbing has the great advantage that, however formidable the obstacle may appear at a distance, it is sure to diminish in difficulty as one approaches it. That which seen from far looks like a smooth face of rock, is found on nearer inspection to be full of inequalities, which stick out obligingly in all directions, and afford in Alpine phraseology 'good holding for hands and feet.' Of course I am only speaking of moderate rock-climbing, of the really difficult performances in that line I know nothing.

Descending the Schwarzkopf by the same route

which we had taken in mounting, we saved much time, and reached Fuscherbad in about three hours. The whole expedition, going leisurely, and including halts, only takes eight hours, and the view from the top well repays the labour of the ascent, which is in some parts very steep.

On the following day we walked down to the village of Fusch, from whence we proceeded by carriage to Saalfelden, a small town lying quite at the foot of the rocky mass of the Steinerne Meer. About half-way the pretty town of Zell is passed on the shores of the lake of the same name. This place, with its fine view of the two parallel, but strangely contrasting mountain ranges, and its pretty foreground of buildings and water, would give delightful opportunities for sketching, and we felt sorry to be obliged to pass it so rapidly.

In the afternoon we reached Saalfelden, and drove up to the *Auer Wirthschaft*, also called the *Poste*, supposed to be the fashionable hotel of the place. Here we got a most extraordinary reception; it was the only hotel where we ever met with positive incivility during our whole tour. On entering we encountered a very fat lady, the owner I conclude, who did not seem up for much exertion, but who signed to us to go upstairs, which we did, and reached the *Speisesaal*, where we found two girls running about to and fro, attending to the orders of several travellers.

I must say in their excuse, that they seemed to be very busy, and to have more on hand just then than they could well manage. With great difficulty we got one of them to listen to our request for two bed-rooms; preceding us into a billiard-room, she pointed to two doors on the opposite side, and said, 'There are the rooms, you can go in.' This, having received the permission, we accordingly did, and found on inspection that they had no egress except through the billiard-room, in which a number of men were playing and smoking. A strong smell of bad tobacco pervaded these apartments, and this, added to the prospect of enduring the noise of the billiard-players till probably late in the night, was too much for us, so returning to the *Speisesaal*, we, after some trouble, succeeded in catching one of the attendant damsels, and making her stand still while we stated our objection to the rooms. Could we have no others? we asked.

'No,' she answered shortly, 'there are no other rooms on this floor.'

'Well, on the floor above?'

'No, there are no rooms for you there.'

'Why not?' we persisted. 'The house is large, they cannot all be full.'

'These are your two rooms,' she answered, evading the question, 'and you must be satisfied with them, you can't have any others;' after which statement she walked off and left us.

Baffled in this quarter, we next tried our chance with the other girl, but she was even more impracticable. She wasted no conversation on us, but merely stood till we had done speaking, and then turning her back, went on with her occupation of washing plates. Having suffered this ignominious defeat, we fell back into the objectionable rooms, and there with Amrhein held a council of war, which ended in a unanimous decision to beat a retreat, and leave the enemy's territory. This movement was executed, we flattered ourselves, in an orderly and dignified manner. Collecting our goods, we went in a body to the young lady with the plates, and announced that not liking the rooms provided for us, we were about to leave the hotel. She looked surprised at us and said promptly—

'There are rooms upstairs that you can have if you choose.'

'Then why were you so rude when we asked you for them before?' I could not help inquiring, utterly puzzled at her conduct.

'I am not the head girl,' she answered sulkily; 'when she did not choose to give them to you, I could not.'

Not feeling inclined to have any more dealings with the autocrat referred to, we resisted the tempting offer of the rooms, and departed to seek our fortune elsewhere. We did not see the fat lady on descending; probably she has no suspicion of the

manner in which her two delegates manage her affairs.

Crossing to the other side of the street, we entered a much smaller inn, and were received by a pleasant-looking woman, in the peasant costume of the country. 'Yes,' she had two rooms she could give us, she answered cheerfully, one with three beds and one with four. Seven beds! We felt quite unequal to the offer, and said mildly, that we thought the room with three beds would be sufficient, so we were shown up to it. It was a large airy room, very clean and tidy, and we thankfully installed ourselves in it. Our next request was for a dinner, and that she was likewise encouraging about. 'Yes, it would be served up soon.' And could she find us a guide for the Steinerne Meer? 'Yes, the best one in the place! She would send him directly.' She seemed inexhaustible in her resources, and we felt ourselves fortunate in having made her acquaintance.

Presently the guide made his appearance, and produced a satisfactory book of recommendations, so we engaged him for the next morning. He agreed to carry one of our bags, and said he would find a porter to carry the other; he did not, according to the usual custom of the country, magnify the difficulties of the col, or make any disparaging observations on ladies, but merely said that it would be a very long day, which was perfectly true; still, allowing for this, we thought the expenses of the

pass unreasonably great. We had to pay these two men about sixty francs for carrying our luggage from Saalfelden to the shore of the Königsee. No porter in Austria is obliged to carry more than twenty pounds weight, for the payment prescribed by tariff; for every additional pound he may charge a certain sum extra by the hour, so that when the number of pounds in excess of twenty is multiplied by the number of hours in a long day, the total has assumed a proportion, the magnitude of which is anything but pleasant to the payer. I fancy that at present few tourists go over this pass; were it to become more frequented, objections would probably be made to the charges as they now are, and some better arrangement would in time ensue.

It is very pleasant in some respects to leave the beaten tracks, and to wander about through the comparative solitudes of the great mountain world, where you are no longer at each turn pestered to buy bits of *Alpenrose* or *Edelweiss*, nor expected to listen for a consideration to the monotonous droning of some children, or the inevitable Alpine horn and its echo. Yet these byways of the Alps have their drawbacks too, and if at times we feel weary of the crowds of tourists, with whom we are perpetually coming in contact in the Bernese Oberland and about the Pennine chain, we should bear in mind that it is in consequence of these very crowds that the arrangements in these districts are so good and convenient.

The tidy Alpine inn, the well made *char* road, the experienced guide, the strong, active porter, the pretty little châlet, under the shade of whose projecting roof hot and weary pedestrians find a table laid with plates of fresh strawberries and bowls of tempting cream—these and many other necessaries and luxuries have been called into existence by that mighty stream of strangers that flows year after year into the well known valleys of the Alps.

'Tout a son bon et son mauvais côté' is a saying as true in the mountains as elsewhere, and the only way to enjoy one's summer holiday thoroughly is to keep always looking on the good side of things, and to turn one's eyes as much as possible from the bad.

There is, however, one misfortune in these regions which, when it falls on the Alpine traveller, completely crushes him for the time. It may and ought, like all other trials, to be borne patiently, but to make any attempt at cheerfulness while undergoing it is impossible, and to put on the semblance of cheerfulness is mere hypocrisy; I allude to prolonged bad weather.

No one who has not experienced it can form an idea of the depressing effect of two or three consecutive wet days in a Swiss valley. The clouds descend till every vestige of the mountains is hidden; you might be in the middle of a plain for all you can tell; the rain pours night and day with steady

even sound on the wooden roof of the house; the country people walk about composedly under their ponderous cotton umbrellas; everything has become mud colour from the clouds above to the glacier torrent below, and what is the worst feature of the case, everything goes on monotonously, not by fits and starts, not with sudden bursts and temporary lulls, but in an orderly unwavering manner, as if the rain had always poured, and the houses and trees had always dripped, and the inhabitants had always carried cotton umbrellas and would continue to do so till the end of time.

What is a wretched tourist to do under these circumstances? It is very well to say, 'Can't you occupy yourself in the house for a day or two?' Of course you could at home, but what is to be done in a little country inn? In the anxiety to make one's luggage small everything except the mere necessaries of life has been left behind. The literature of the hotel is usually composed of some old illustrated papers, a large history of Switzerland which none care about, several odd volumes of English novels, a book of poems by no one in particular, and two or three old guide books; much reading is therefore out of the question; sketching is as impossible as climbing in wet weather; conversation flags after the first day. What is one to do?

There is to be sure the resource of mending one's

clothes, and this is perhaps, under the circumstances, the most cheerful occupation to be found. It is suggestive, and while darning the last rent in one's mountain suit, the bright idea presents itself that before very long there may come an opportunity of giving it another; but where the supply of clothes is so limited, unfortunately the number of holes must be limited also, and at last there is nothing left but to stand at the window and watch for some signs of relenting in the inexorable sky.

All those who spend a summer in Alpine regions must make up their minds to these periods of depression. Mountains will attract clouds as well as tourists, and the former will at times deluge the latter, who must just submit to the infliction with the best grace they can.

Fortunately no such trial awaited us at Saalfelden; the weather was all we could wish for, and strolling outside the town we sat on the trunk of a felled tree and watched the setting sun, which in departing poured the full glory of its slanting rays on the Steinerne Meer, till beautified by their contact those stern rocks glowed with softened radiance in the rosy evening light. But not long did this borrowed splendour last; stealthily the great shadow of night crept up their dark sides and the parting smile of day faded from their stony features, leaving them still colder and harder than they were before; then came the curious chill so often felt in warm climates

at the moment when the sun disappears below the horizon, and gathering our cloaks round us we slowly wended our way homewards. It was a case of 'Early to bed and early to rise' on this occasion, and having had some coffee we retired for the night, or at least for that small portion of it which was to be allotted for sleep.

The moon was still shining brightly when next morning mustering our forces at the door of the hotel we took leave of our kind hostess and threaded our way noiselessly through the sleeping town. Once clear of the houses we turned our faces northwards and made straight for the rocky barrier whose wall we had to scale. Before reaching those heights much preliminary ground had to be gone over. First we followed a broad *char* road through the forest which clothes the foot of the range, mounting in diminished density up its rugged sides till its irregular outline can be but faintly traced near the base of the rocks where all vegetation ceases. In the neighbourhood of Saalfelden the trees were still fine and well grown, and their great shadows lay dark and sharp on the moonlit ground over which we picked our way. After a short time the road contracted and we entered a very pretty wooded glen, beside whose mountain stream the path, now narrow but good, led us up rather rapidly for about an hour; after which we emerged from the valley and bore away to the west in a diagonal line, now up, now

down, across the steep but still wooded spurs of the chain. In proportion as we rose the trees began to deteriorate; less tall, less straight, less green, their failing ranks became thinner and thinner till at last a few stunted and weather-beaten stragglers alone remained, like outposts of the great army below, fighting a brave but losing battle with the storms and frosts of the elevated regions to which they had attained.

The moonlight had faded into the dawn, and the dawn had brightened into the day, before the last tree was passed; and now having reached the close green turf of the upper Alpine pastures we heard with pleasure the welcome tinkle of the cow bells, and saw a châlet not very far off where milk and butter were to be procured. We had eaten little or nothing before starting, and at this moment breakfast was the all-engrossing object of our thoughts.

In spite, however, of hunger, we could not help stopping some time to watch with interest the unusual sight of a large herd of chamois feeding on some stunted herbage at the foot of the rocks not very far off. With the help of a telescope they could be distinctly seen, and the guides counted thirty-two of them. The shooting of this district belongs to an Austrian nobleman, who has the ground carefully preserved. To kill one of these animals without permission is an offence punishable both with fine and imprisonment, and it seemed

almost as if they were aware of the laws for their protection, for though we must have been at least as visible to them as they to us they took no notice of our movements, but continued composedly to eat their breakfast.

Their occupation was suggestive to hungry people, and after awhile we ceased watching them, and pushed on rapidly to the châlet, where we were soon engaged in following their example, and quite as much taken up with our repast as they had been with theirs. We had our meal on a stone outside the hut in company with the pigs of the establishment, who came up grunting and poking their long snouts at us, in some perplexity as to who and what we were. We tried to make them understand, by sundry small raps with our *alpenstocks*, that their conduct was intrusive and their manners not good; but they either could not, or with their proverbial obstinacy, they would not take in what we meant, and went on persistently grunting and staring at us all the time. I suspect they did not like to see the way in which we were drinking milk, fearing there might be a stint for them in consequence.

Breakfast having given us fresh strength and courage, we set off cheerfully for the rocks, which were now within about half an hour of us, and looked exceedingly uninviting. To this day I cannot understand those rocks. They proved after all to be only a gigantic humbug. Up to the very

last minute they preserved their formidable appearance, and frowned down on us most discouragingly, and yet when we began actually to climb them they turned out to be neither very difficult nor very steep, nor very fatiguing, and when after rather more than an hour's scrambling we stood on the top of them we could scarcely believe that our work was done, and that we had scaled the great rampart which from a distance had seemed so unassailable.

From this point we gained for the first time a view of the entire snow range, of which the Gross Glockner is the culminating point. This chain, which must be of immense length, was visible from where we stood, extending from right to left as far as the eye could reach. It was a lovely sight, all those peaks and domes and spires of snow, shining in the morning sun, against their background of softest blue, while between us and them lay the quiet little Zellersee, a tiny mirror reflecting the two great ranges at whose feet it lies.

Turning to the north an extraordinary sight met our eyes; some hundred feet below us we saw at last the great plateau which has given its name to the range. Arid and desolate this vast petrified sea, covering several miles in extent, lies in a basin surrounded on all sides by gaunt barren rocks. There is something inexpressibly dreary in its aspect; hard and grey, it seems to lie under some evil spell; for ever beating with stony waves against

its inhospitable shores, yet motionless, soundless, deserted. Unlike a sea of water no soft reflections enliven its dull surface, unlike a sea of ice no fair mixture of white and blue colours its monotony, it has nothing to relieve the harshness of its rocky outlines, nor to cheer the sadness of its solitude. A few miserable trees stick up here and there through the crevices of the rocks, where a little earth has collected, and some scanty herbage crops up at intervals among the stones, but these abortive attempts at vegetation give no pleasure to the eye, withered and dwindled they seem as if the curse of the place had rested on them, and stopped their growth.

How long has this wilderness existed? How many ages have passed since the parent glacier moulded it into its present shape, and then melted slowly away, leaving the impression of its icy form on the stone beneath, till the very rocks have taken and retained a sort of grotesque likeness to the *séracs* and crevasses which once covered them? How long will it be ere soft green pastures undulate on its surface, and sweet Alpine flowers deck its plain?

They were puzzling riddles which this stony sphinx put to us, and we were no Œdipus to solve them.

The descent from the ridge is steep but short, and, having accomplished it, we launched forth on the wastes of the Steinerne Meer. The track (it can

scarcely be called a path) is made possible to follow by the help of small stone signals, built at intervals along it; but for these, in the event of a fog coming on, it would be very difficult to find the way. The rocks, rounded and smoothed by glacier action, are extremely slippery, and constant care is required to avoid a fall on their polished surface which gives the uncertain footing of ice without its capability of improvement under the stroke of the axe. The way is long from one shore to the other, and the glare of the sun, reflected back from the hard substance on which it falls, produces almost intolerable heat and an amount of dryness in the air causing intense thirst. No water was to be met with till the opposite side was reached, and I do not think I ever longed so for a drink as I did on that day, and when at last we attained the precious spring, a prodigious number of times were our glasses filled and emptied before we were all satisfied. From this point the path rises for some time, till the hollow of the Steinerne Meer is left behind and the ridge on the Bavarian side is gained; thence the descent is continuous to the shores of the Königsee, not so precipitous at the summit as on the southern side of the range, but very long and in parts very steep.

The views obtained on this entire pass, called sometimes the Weissbachscharte, are very beautiful and varied. For a col of its height, only 7,462 feet, it is exceedingly imposing, and its forests, its distant

views, and its rock and lake scenery are of the highest order, whilst the table-land at its summit is quite unique in character, and presents a scene unrivalled perhaps for wildness throughout the Alps.

Where there are ladies of the party, a long day should be allowed for this pass, and the start cannot be made too early; including halts, it took us more than thirteen hours to reach the shore of the Königsee, from whence we were an hour and a half going by boat before we reached the village of that name, situated at the other end of the lake. There will also very likely be a delay in procuring a boat, so that from Saalfelden to the Königsee hotel fifteen or sixteen hours would not be too much to allow for the expedition. The walk is fatiguing, both from its length and the roughness of the road, and also from the constant effort and attention required to keep one's feet during the passage of the Steinerne Meer and during a great part of the descent, where the rounded glacier rock still preponderates, but the beauty and singularity of the pass well repay the traveller for any fatigue, discomfort, or thirst endured while crossing it. No one who has strength for the walk should omit to take it, if it comes in his way; indeed it is almost worth making a *détour*, should time and circumstances permit, in order to enjoy the excursion.

We had intended, in descending to the lake, to leave the ordinary path and make a variation advised

in 'Ball's Alpine Guide,' on the authority of Mr. Tuckett, and the porters promised to take us by that route, but they either did not know it or they preferred the usual way, and we did not discover till too late which course they had selected. That, however, by which we went was so fine that we did not feel inclined to quarrel with it, and the passage of a most remarkable cleft in the rocks, down which a path called the Saugasse plunges in seventy-seven steep zigzags, is in itself a curiosity well worth a visit. This wild gorge, when seen from below, presents a most extraordinary appearance; it is a little like the Finsteraarschlucht near Meiringen, but without a river at its base, and on a much larger scale, and the angle down which the path lies is of a most unpleasant degree of acuteness.

On a very steep descent it seems much easier to go on rough ground or rock, where the inequalities of the surface afford sufficient footing, than as in this case on a hard smooth path, where the small round stones slip from under one's feet, and no holding is to be got; twice during this descent one of our porters fell, and I felt relieved when my sister and I arrived safe at the bottom of it on our feet, and not, as I had anticipated, on our heads. Once past the Saugasse, the path, though very far from following a horizontal line, is nevertheless a good bit out of the perpendicular, and our progress was no longer so slow, but we had some more rough

walking still to get through, and when at last the long descent was accomplished, and we had reached the shore of the Königsee, we were not sorry to sit down by its green waters, and to know that the rest of our journey could not be accomplished on foot.

We had sent on one of our porters with orders to bring a boat to meet us from a small landing-place and *café* at a little distance, but we could never make out how that individual spent his time on arriving there, probably in smoking and drinking beer; at any rate he procured no boat, and after waiting for some time in vain we had to despatch the other man in search of one. All this made a long delay, and the grey shades of evening had fallen on the lake and its precipitous shores before our boat was at last seen approaching the spot where we sat.

When it arrived we did not much like the look of it. It was a tiny craft, flat-bottomed and very shallow, and when laden with six people and a bag its edge and that of the water were in unpleasant proximity. It did not give me the idea of a real boat either, but looked more like a makeshift of some kind, as if an ingenious person had contrived it in a hurry for the occasion out of an old box. Our second porter and bag had been sent on by another boat, fortunately for us, for I am sure his additional weight would have swamped our leaky conveyance; as it was we had to sit very steadily not to upset it.

The water was smooth as glass all round; like

glass too it reflected the steep shores of the lake with such distinctness, that in the half light which still remained the line where rock and water met was invisible, and it was impossible to define where the reality ended and the reflection began. I cannot describe the extraordinary effect produced by this deceptive appearance. The water represented the scene around it so perfectly that it ceased to be visible itself; we no longer seemed to be rowing on a lake, we were gliding through the air, over the heavens beneath us, encircled on all sides by oval-shaped mountains, whose summits and bases, alike pointed, pierced into two distinct skies. Anything more weird or unearthly I cannot imagine than that twilight hour on the Königsee, and when the night at last closed in, and by hiding the surroundings destroyed the illusion, it seemed difficult at first to realise that we were doing nothing more out of the way than navigating an ordinary sheet of water in a very crazy old boat.

I was not sorry when we neared the lights on the landing-place of Königsee, and I was very thankful when not long afterwards I felt the planks under my feet grate on the shore, and that we had stepped out safe and sound on *terra firma*, and leaving the dark, mysterious lake and our fragile bark behind us proceeded on foot to the little hotel close by. We had been going from before dawn till after dark, and had had enough of it; our hopes and affections were now

temporarily centred on three objects; the first of these was brought up not long afterwards to one of our rooms on a well-filled tray, and the other two, soft and white, with their downy pillows and gently turned back coverlids, made mute appeals to our tired senses, which were not long made in vain, and dreamless sleep ended the toils of this long and fatiguing, yet very pleasant day.

The next morning we strolled about the water's edge, not being inclined for much walking, and in the afternoon we hired a boat—boating is the great occupation of the place—and went up the lake once more; but though very beautiful and picturesque, it was not the magic scene of the previous night; the spell was broken, the enchantment dissolved, and we only saw a very lovely sheet of water, in whose green depths the steep surrounding mountains were reflected.

In some places the rocks descend quite straight into the water, and at one precipice a ghastly tale is told of a boat swamped at its base by a falling fragment of rock, and which went down with its freight of a hundred human beings into the awful depths below; they were pilgrims visiting a small shrine fastened to the face of the rock. It was a saddening history to listen to as we rowed past the very spot. A hundred precious lives lost for a delusion! A hundred human voices silenced in death, whose prayers from their own homes would have risen as

acceptably to the throne of Heaven as from the holiest shrine on earth.

The boats on the Königsee are all flat-bottomed, and do not look fit to encounter rough weather; they are generally rowed by a man and a woman, one person sitting and holding the oar in the usual manner, and the other standing facing the bow, as is the custom in the gondolas of Venice. The boats for hire on this lake are managed on a very good system; instead of being tormented with offers from boatmen every time one ventures near the shore, as is so often the case at the Swiss lakes, there is here at the landing-place a regular printed tariff of the prices, and a man is always on the spot to whom application can be made, and who immediately provides the tourists with that which they require.

The principal portion of the lake cannot be seen from the hotel, and the only way of attaining it is by water, the shores being in many parts so completely precipitous, that there is not room for the smallest path along their margin. It is this very steepness of its edges, which gives to the Königsee its peculiar beauty and causes the distinct reflections, that in some lights are so marvellous. This is the only place where I ever saw the *alpenrose* grow down to the water's brink; the time of the flowers was over when we passed, but in the early season, its deep pink blossoms must produce a lovely effect lying against the dark placid water. The upper

end of the lake is narrow and flat for a small space round, and beyond it there is another and much smaller sheet of water, called the Obersee, a favourite resort of excursionists.

The Königsee was often visited by the late King Maximilian of Bavaria, who built a hunting lodge about half way up the lake, on one of the few spots where its shores are sufficiently flat to allow of any such erection. From thence he went on expeditions among the neighbouring mountains in search of chamois, which in his time were carefully preserved and very numerous; the present King never comes to the place, and the laws against poaching are now seldom enforced.

Numbers of visitors from Berchtesgaden and Salzburg arrive every morning during the season at the hamlet of Königsee, and spend the day on or about the lake, which is the great attraction of the place, driving home to their respective destinations in the evening; comparatively few travellers stop at the hotel, which is however clean and tolerably comfortable.

The quantity of beer consumed in this place quite amazed us; there is a veranda in front of the hotel, facing the lake, to which most of the German visitors betake themselves either before or after their excursions on the water, and two or three waiters seem to have as much as they can do to supply all these thirsty people with endless glasses of the popular

beverage of the country. These glasses are tankard-shape, and of enormous dimensions, yet a Bavarian thinks nothing of emptying one in a few minutes. In the hotel there appears to be an *ad libitum* supply of beer provided for the whole establishment; on a side table in the *salle* stand several tankards in various stages of repletion, and all the servants, men and women, rush in and refresh themselves with their contents whenever the fancy seizes them, which is not seldom. It must be a most unwholesome habit, and the bloated faces and figures of many of the people bear witness to their excesses in this respect. Indeed a large proportion of them on attaining to middle age, attain at the same time to a rotundity of form, of which the constant repetition becomes quite monotonous to the eye, and as they slowly descend to the landing-place and deposit themselves in the small boats awaiting them, one feels uneasy lest these frail vessels should be swamped by their ponderous cargo.

On leaving Königsee, a short and pretty drive brought us to Berchtesgaden, where we remained for some hours. This place, as most people are aware, is famous for its salt mines, and we knew that we ought to go down and visit these subterranean curiosities, but somehow we did not take to the idea of the expedition; I suppose we were so accustomed to mount to the heights of the earth, that a journey in the contrary direction down to its depths was repugnant

to us; at any rate we lacked physical courage to descend the shafts into these dark cavities, and moral courage to emerge from them again into the broad light of day, habited, as was described to us, in miner costume, and riding on a kind of rough wooden horse.

In this dilemma, we hit on the delightful plan of visiting the mines by proxy, and having despatched Amrhein in our stead to explore their recesses, we spent our time in a manner more congenial to us, wandering about on the world's upper surface, and examining the carved wood, in the execution of which the inhabitants of Berchtesgaden are said to excel. The workmanship of some of the figures, particularly of the chamois, was very good, finer and better I think than in Switzerland; but in the other articles, we saw little or no difference between the productions of the two countries, and the German prices struck us as being the higher of the two. I do not like however to state this too positively, knowing that good authorities have given the contrary opinion; all I can say for certain is, that a month later I found prettier objects and in greater variety at the shops of Lucerne, and also that we got the articles which we bought in the latter place at cheaper prices than those asked us either in Berchtesgaden or Salzburg.

After more than an hour's absence our guide returned much delighted with the wonders of the

underground world, and we listened complacently to his descriptions, tasted bits of salt, and felt satisfied with our share in the expedition. We asked him how the ladies looked, and he said, 'Très jolies,' which statement I rather doubt; but he was so pleased with the novelty of the sight that he was determined to admire everything connected with it.

That same evening we drove on to Salzburg, and there, amidst the magnificence and luxuries of the Hôtel de l'Europe, surrounded by gilding and decorations, by statues and flowers, by velvet and satin, dazzled by the glitter of innumerable gas chandeliers, and bewildered by the attentions of scores of obsequious waiters, we bid adieu for the year to the dear old mountain life, with its discomforts and its roughness, its oddities and its absurdities, its happy days of toil and its happy days of idleness, its joyous freedom both of thought and action, and its wondrous scenes of beauty and grandeur.

1874 must sink into the past, and 1875 must rise out of the future long before we can hope to revisit our favourite haunts. In this world of change and uncertainty there is but one thing of which we can be sure, that many months must elapse before our feet stand again on the crisp mountain snow, before our hands grasp the familiar *alpenstock*, and our ears catch the well-known sound of the ice-axe cleaving our upward way; before our eyes gaze again on the

fair Alpine world, and our lungs are filled with its life-giving air. The play-time is over, the playground is empty, and all the players have been called in from their summer games to take again their allotted places in the great school of life.

Before taking leave of any of my kind readers who may have followed us thus far in our wanderings, I wish to add a short chapter to this little book, for the benefit of those who, like ourselves, spend their summers among the mountains, in the hope that a few plain directions contained in it may be of use to them, and that the knowledge we gained from that rather hard teacher, experience, may be communicated to them in gentler fashion, and without the severe lessons with which its acquisition was at times enforced on us.

Chapter X.

HINTS TO LADY PEDESTRIANS.

The first thing in order, if not in importance, which must be thought of by a lady intending to make long Alpine expeditions, is the dress which she is to wear when on the mountain. This is a more serious consideration than might at first be supposed, as not only should she aim at presenting as much as possible a tidy appearance on all occasions, but also must she endeavour to have clothes which will protect her effectually from extremes of heat and cold, and which will not impede her movements more than can be helped, in situations where great exertion and activity are required. A great deal of her comfort and enjoyment will depend on her costume being suitable and well selected.

To begin with her hat; it ought to be light, large, slightly mushroom-shaped to shade the eyes, lined with some thick white material to protect the head

from the sun's rays, and trimmed simply, in a manner to bear rain without being spoiled. White Indian muslin is convenient for this purpose, as it can be taken off and washed as often as necessary, but when a veil is worn along with it, it looks a little clumsy; a small silk scarf, or a piece of black ribbon looks better, and is not much the worse for a wetting. The hat should be firmly attached to the head with strong elastic, to prevent its slipping back or over the eyes in the high winds so often encountered at great elevations; above all things it should not press on the forehead; nothing is more tiring to the head than the continued stress of a hat, which has often to be worn for twelve or fourteen hours at a time.

Plenty of blue gossamer should be taken, as the veil so constantly worn will have to be often renewed. The parasol should be large, as it must serve also for an umbrella, light, not to attract the sun, and lined with a dark color to give shade; blue is the best, as it does not fade, and is pleasant to the eyes. A veil will afford sufficient protection to the face so long as a parasol can be used along with it, but on rocks, snow slopes, or glaciers, it is often impossible to hold up the latter, and then the veil must be discarded, and the mask adopted in its place, which should be made either of soft linen, or of cambric doubled, and may be of the simplest construction, two holes for the eyes, and one for the mouth, being

all the features required. This rather absurd-looking disguise is absolutely necessary to those who wish to preserve the skin of their faces whole; one day spent without it on snow and ice, and the consequence is a face of the deepest crimson, embossed with large white blisters, painful to the owner, and hideous to all beholders. No lady, however devoid she may be of vanity or personal attractions, would like to present such a spectacle, and the only safeguard against it lies in the use of a linen mask. Care should be taken to make it large and long, so that it may cover the throat also, or else a scarlet rim will mark the place where the neck-handkerchief has ceased to afford protection. A pair of blue glasses or spectacles must always be worn while on snow, to protect the eyes from inflammation.

All the clothing should be of wool; the thinnest and softest materials may be used, but in situations where great heat is sometimes followed almost immediately by intense cold, any other substance causes a chill, and is both uncomfortable and unwholesome. The dress and jacket should be of a woollen texture, capable of bearing sun and rain, without either fading or shrinking; Scotch tweed or homespun are good, but they must not be too heavy; grey, brown, or black and white, are the best colours to use, and all superfluous trimmings, such as fringes, frills, &c., should be avoided. A waterproof is indispensable.

The boots are a very important part of a mountaineering outfit, and great care should be taken to have them large and comfortable. The soles should be both very thick and very wide, and the heels low and quite straight behind: elastic sides are unfit for mountain boots, being soon spoiled by snow and water; those laced up the front are the most useful, and keep out the wet best, but in soft snow gaiters should also be worn to preserve the feet and ankles dry. These it is best to order for oneself, the gaiters to be had in London ready-made for ladies being rather smart and ornamental, but of no use whatever for hard work: they may be either of leather or of cloth, according to the fancy of the wearer. It is better to have nails put in the boots in Switzerland—they are fastened in firmer there than in England; but it is a process that must often be repeated, as they come out constantly on rocks and stones. Very good strong boots can be got in any of the large Swiss towns: on the whole they are preferable, I almost think, to those of English make. Woollen stockings should always be worn.

Once provided with a suitable costume, the next consideration is a bag in which to put the remainder of the clothes required, and this with ladies is always a difficulty. It is impossible for them to compress their wardrobe into the same small compass as that of a gentleman, and on many high passes the luggage of two ladies is too much for one porter, and a

second has to be taken, which is expensive, or one bag must be sent round, which is inconvenient. The bag should be of good leather, but as light as possible; the square shape is better than the flat; and besides the lock, there should be straps at each end of the opening, to keep it close, and prevent the rain from penetrating; the size must, of course, depend on the quantity of clothes which the wearer allows herself. Some people prefer a valise to a bag; the former is the most convenient, and crushes its contents least; the latter is the lightest. During a tour of a week or two it is impossible to look tidy without a second dress, and this alone takes a great deal of room, and there are many articles on which comfort so absolutely depends, that they cannot be left behind; it is well, however, to bear in mind while making a selection that every additional pound's weight will add to the expense and trouble of locomotion, and that the lighter the luggage the easier it will be conveyed. It is not a bad plan to take also a very small waterproof knapsack, which for a mountain ascent may contain the things required for one night, and which being very light can be carried by one of the guides, thus saving the expense of a porter for the expedition. The bulk of the luggage can always be sent on from town to town, either by railway or *diligence*, and in this manner the contents of the Alpine bag can be changed and refreshed at intervals during the course of the summer.

Besides the clothes and toilet necessaries which must be taken, there are a few other articles that add so materially to the tourist's well-being during a walking expedition, that even the consideration of their weight should not prevent their being included among the indispensables in the bag. I will enumerate those which we found most useful. A small quantity of good tea to supplement the very doubtful concoction given under that name in mountain inns. A pot of 'Liebig's Extract,' with which either to make soup where none can be got, or to add a small quantity of it to the *potage* produced, where this latter is chiefly composed of water. A few English biscuits when going to the Italian or Tyrolese valleys, in which the bread is very likely to be sour and indigestible. Some chocolate, which is very nourishing, and takes little room, and also a few raisins. Above all things a small etna and some spirits of wine. This article will be found particularly convenient in cases of early starts, when, at 2 or 3 o'clock A.M., it is almost impossible to get anything hot in an hotel, and the early riser is forced to wait some time, and lose a portion of the cool morning hour for which his sleep has been sacrificed, or to start without any breakfast, a most uncomfortable and unwholesome proceeding. It is easy to keep some coffee or milk from the night before, and this heated in the etna, with a piece of bread or biscuit, makes a very fair breakfast; or, if preferred,

some soup can be made with the 'Liebig's Extract.' Everyone should, if possible, eat a little, no matter how early the hour, before beginning a long day of exercise and exertion. These supplies, with some glycerine and a small bottle of homœopathic arnica for sprains or bruises, will be found well worth the little additional space which they require.

Health is a most important consideration in all these expeditions, as without its possession the fairest scenes and most interesting objects would lose all their charms in the eyes of the beholder, and that amount of exertion which gives pleasure to the robust would cause weariness to the languid or ailing frame. With most people, the pure fresh air breathed, and the active life led on the mountains, are generally enough in themselves to produce a healthy condition, but a few rules should be observed, and a few precautions taken, to prevent the unwonted amount of exercise from disagreeing with, or over-fatiguing, persons whose habits, like those of many ladies, are usually sedentary. On no account should very long or arduous excursions be attempted at first; a fortnight is not too much to devote each year to training; that is, by walks short to begin with, and increasing gradually in length, to harden the muscles and accustom the limbs to the severe work required of them. After due preparation a long day of exertion will often cause no fatigue whatever, at least none that a good night's

rest will not take away; but any neglect of the rule to train beforehand will surely be repented of, and two or three days of exhaustion and intolerable stiffness will punish the unwary pedestrian who has disregarded it.

A very fatiguing day should always, with ladies, be followed by one of complete rest. Sometimes, from a concatenation of circumstances, this is inconvenient or impossible, and two or three long walks have to be taken in succession, but this should be the exception, for though at the time the excitement may perhaps keep up the walker's strength, the exertion is too great a strain on the system, and if persisted in would sooner or later surely injure her health.

Too much cold water should not be taken during the early part of the day, when there is still much of the ascent to be performed, as it is apt to impede the powers of breathing on steep places; on the descent it may often be indulged in, provided it be spring water, and not swallowed in large quantities at a time, or too quickly if very cold. It will be found more quenching, though perhaps less enjoyable at the moment, if a little light wine is added to it. For persons with whom it agrees, the excellent milk, which is almost always to be found in châlets on the Alps at some time of the day, is a very pleasant beverage, and to those who cannot eat much while walking and suffering

from thirst, it affords both nourishment and refreshment.

A good guide is indispensable to ladies on a mountain tour, and when they have found an experienced and trustworthy man who suits them, they had better keep him for the whole season. It does not signify if he should not be acquainted with all the places which they intend to visit, as they will always have to engage a second guide for glacier passes or high mountains, and this latter man being taken in his own locality will be sure to know the way.

When ladies attempt any considerable ascent, their leading guide should be first-rate, as being unable to do much for themselves they depend almost entirely for safety on the assistance they receive, and a man of that class will know how to escape any difficulties that are avoidable, and how to help them over those which must be encountered. They should also be regulated in their movements by the advice of these trained mountaineers, and be prepared to go without hesitation where they are assured that they can do so with safety. All that is necessary to qualify them for moderate Alpine climbs such as I have described in this book is, as I have already stated, that they should have health, strength, a steady head, unmoved by the sight of a precipice beneath them, and a determination to do what they are told. If they possess these advantages, and are

guided by men of ability and experience, they will run little more danger, and obtain an immeasurably greater amount of enjoyment on the trackless heights of the Alps than if they were content to drive along the dusty high roads of the valleys, or to ride with the tourist multitude over the sun-scorched mule paths of the lower passes.

They will find their walking powers increase year after year, as habit and practice make them more capable of sustaining the fatigue of long periods of exercise. The difficulties which at first sight appeared so formidable will by degrees dwindle down considerably, and after a few years they will smile as they look back on their first attempts at climbing, and remember the magnitude and importance with which they invested those early performances.

They will lose the fool-hardiness of ignorance, and in proportion as they become more fit to cope with the difficulties that they encounter they will understand better where the real dangers of the Alpine world lie, and will become at the same time more courageous and less adventurous than as beginners they were wont to be.

They will, for instance, walk with the help of a guide's hand firmly and freely on ice, even should it be but a narrow bridge across a deep crevasse, and they will mount or descend a steep snow slope without being made uncomfortable by the know-

ledge that below it yawns a *Bergschrund*, or that it leads to the edge of a precipice: but they will be very careful of wandering by themselves on mountains with which they are not well acquainted, or of leaving the beaten tracks and scrambling about at random in search of flowers or ferns.

A lady is far safer on a difficult, broken glacier under the protection of a careful guide than when clambling by herself over comparatively easy grass slopes. She never can tell when the incline may just reach the point at which she will be unable to maintain her footing, or when in stretching forward to grasp some coveted flower she may lose her balance, and perhaps her life. Many such accidents have been recorded from year to year, which with a little more prudence and knowledge would never have happened, and these sad occurrences do not unfortunately seem to deter others from running the same risks.

The Swiss mountains are on too large a scale to be trifled with, and their hidden dangers are invariably the greatest and the most to be dreaded. Nothing looks safer and easier to go upon than a smooth field of *névé*. The snow is so crisp and pleasant under foot, the sky is so clear and blue overhead, the light mountain air is so exhilarating to the spirits, and it is thought a bore to be impeded in one's movements by the appendage of fifty or sixty feet of rope, which obliges all the members of

the party to follow each other's footsteps, and to keep their distances with tiresome regularity, instead of wandering hither and thither as the fancy seizes them.

Unfortunately, many guides, even some of the best, agree in this feeling with the inexperienced tourist, and either neglect or postpone the evil moment of putting on the rope, unless they are reminded of its necessity: all ladies should therefore insist on the precaution being adopted whenever they are on a snow-covered glacier. They will sometimes be told that the crevasses are small, or that if large their locality is well known, or that they are not yet reached; but it is far safer to disregard these excuses, and to be roped at once, for it should never be forgotten that these seemingly secure snow-fields are generally more or less interspersed by deep cracks in the underlying ice, of which sometimes not a sign appears on the surface, and that the careless and unsuspecting pedestrian may in a moment fall into one of their ghastly depths, from which rescue is always most difficult, and, sometimes, alas! impossible.

All the highest authorities on mountaineering have agreed in the opinion that the judicious use of a good rope will guard effectually against this danger, and it seems therefore like folly, and worse than folly, to slight the reiterated warnings given by those best acquainted with the Alps, and from

sheer negligence or idleness, to incur the risk of being precipitated into, and it may be, buried alive in one of these awful sepulchres of ice. Protection from such a fate may be considered to be easily purchased at the expense of a little discomfort and trouble.

There is with ladies, even for those who attain a certain degree above the average capacity of climbing, a great drawback to many of the most interesting ascents. I allude to the impossibility of making some of these excursions in one day, and the necessity of sleeping in a cave or small hut, containing but one room. Of course in this matter every lady must be the best judge for herself, whether or not she will submit to this amount of roughing. Of these places I only speak by hearsay, as we have never spent a night in one of them, but from the description given of them they must be the very reverse of agreeable, and it is a question whether the pleasantness of the following day will counterbalance the unpleasantness of the preceding night.

For the comfort of those who, like ourselves, shrink from such rough quarters, it is good to know that they need not be debarred from all great ascents by this difficulty. A few of the first-class mountains, including the two highest summits of the Alps, may be reached either in one day, or by spending the intervening night in châlets or huts, which, though small, will afford to ladies the accommoda-

tion of a separate bedroom, and the same may be said of several of the finest glacier passes. They and we may therefore console ourselves with the reflection that, should our powers be equal to them, many great expeditions may yet be in store for us, and these future exploits are pleasant to look forward to, even if in the inevitable course of events, they should fail of being ever accomplished.

CHAPTER XI.

CONCLUSION.

In the preceding chapter I have spoken principally of the dangers, the difficulties, and the discomforts of the Alps; but before leaving the subject altogether I would ask my readers to give a glance at the sunny side of the picture also, and in memory of all the pleasant days that we may have spent together, to linger for a few minutes longer in thought together amidst the great mountains, and to stray through forests and meadows, by streams and rivers, over rocks and glaciers, till we reach at last some snow-crowned summit, and rest contentedly there, high above the noise and turmoil of the world below.

What do we see from our exalted station? This is exactly the question which is often asked in jest by the dwellers in the plain.

"What do you see from the top of a mountain,

say these non-climbers, 'that you should worry and tire and fag yourselves to get there? You leave your beds when you had far better be asleep; you swallow hastily a few mouthfuls of bad breakfast, and you toil and struggle for hours together through heat and cold, till you reach the summit of some peak or other; and what do you gain by it all? There is no beauty in a bird's-eye view. What advantage have you over us? Look at us; we rise at a rational hour, we eat our breakfast leisurely and comfortably at the right time, and then we stroll out at our ease, and looking up at the very mountain on which you are perched, see it twice as well from below as you do from above.'

This all sounds very plausible, and at first one almost fears that they have the best of the argument, but let a few questions be asked and it nearly always turns out that not one of them has ever been up a high mountain in his or her life; so what can they know about it? They cannot possibly be judges.

What do they know of the beauty of that early hour, when the glimmering dawn creeps slowly over ice and snow, when the pale, cold outlines of the mountains intensify and sharpen with the growing light, till the first quivering flash of day touches the highest peak, and in a few minutes the rising sun has transformed the whole range into a mass of burnished gold? We are seated on some rocky ledge

enjoying the glorious view, and what are our friends about below? They are sound asleep, and do not even dream of the mountains or of the sun.

Again, a little later, we sit in the full, fresh brightness of the morning, this time on the highest point, and watch the light, vapoury clouds rise from the valleys beneath, sweeping fantastically up the mountain's side, and fading into transparency in the warm sunbeams; we see the distant peaks as they cast off their misty veils, and display their graceful outlines against the clearness of the summer sky; we look at the glittering purity of the snow around us, and dropping our eyes to the glacier beneath, gaze down deep into the blue tracery of its crevasses. Who has the best of it now? We who have toiled and panted up the steep incline, or our friends below, who have made the descent of the hotel staircase, and after the usual demand for '*Kaffee und zwei Eier*,' are now engaged in partaking of these delicacies, with no better view before them than that presented by the opposite wall of the *salle*?

At least if we have not the best of it, we have divided the good things of this world evenly between us, and if they have comfort, ease, and idleness, we on our part have something to make up to us for the loss of those luxuries.

Another accusation is sometimes brought against Alpine walkers, which, though false in some respects, has yet more truth in it than that theory so often

propounded, that mountains are best seen from a distance. This second objection is that the indefatigable climber who is always ascending some peak or pass does it, not from any genuine love for nature, not from admiration of the grand scenes through which he hurries, but merely for the sake of getting up to the top as fast as he can and running down again, just to be able to boast afterwards that he has 'done' such and such a celebrated mountain or col in so many hours.

No one who reads much of Alpine literature will believe the first part of this charge, nor think for a moment that those men who spend so many hours amidst the grandest scenes in the Alps, and describe them so well, can be blind to the beauties which they behold; but that a large proportion of them climb for the pleasure and satisfaction of carrying their point, and of reaching the summit in spite of almost insuperable obstacles, may no doubt be true.

To overcome a difficulty is a gratifying performance, whatever that difficulty may be. That which we gain with trouble and effort has more value in our eyes than that which comes to us of itself, and as human nature is the same whether it happens to be at the level of the sea or some 15,000 feet above it, we can well imagine to ourselves how delightful the sensation must be to stand at last on the coveted little space of rock or snow, and to realise that the hard battle has been fairly fought and won. No one

can blame this feeling, and everyone can understand it.

But there is yet another source of pleasure in mountain life which is not so easy to explain. I mean a love of climbing, not for any particular object, but just for the sake of the act itself, for the enjoyment of rising higher and higher above the valley or plain, till the crowning point is reached. This is a curious feeling, and hard to analyse. It is easier to define what it is not than what it is. It is not the ambition to overcome difficulties, for it may exist where there are none in the way; neither is it a wish to do something more than other people, nor to electrify them with the account of the deed afterwards, for the longing to rise is just as strong, in those who have it, on a small hill where no honour or glory can possibly be gained as on some lofty and famous mountain.

It is strange that there should be so much more satisfaction in resting on the summit of the thing climbed than within half an hour of it. The view from both places may be almost identical, the lower spot may have shelter, while the upper one is exposed to a keen wind; the few remaining feet to be gained in height can add but little to the dignity of the expedition, and yet no one would think of turning back, except under compulsion, short of the summit of even the lowliest hill.

Why is it so pleasant to attain to the very highest

point? and whence comes the feeling of complacency that steals over us as we sit down there to rest on the little jutting mound or stone that is a few inches above its neighbours? Who can tell! Why does the bird choose for his perch the topmost branch of a tree as he carols forth his joyous song? Probably he cannot tell either.

In speaking of the various pleasures of mountaineering, there is the passive as well as the active part, which must on no account be omitted. Very enjoyable to the pedestrian, after a long day of exertion and excitement, is the following period of absolute rest. How delightful to stroll out after breakfast and sit on the grass in the deep shadow of some sheltering tree. There is just enough of fatigue left to make perfect stillness agreeable, and, with the transparent excuse of a book or an old 'Swiss Times,' to abandon oneself for the moment to the luxury of doing nothing.

The heat of the day has already commenced, but a little of the morning freshness still remains, and the air is light and buoyant. Everything is quiet around; only a few sounds break from time to time the silence which would else become oppressive; now it is the tinkle of a distant cow-bell, and anon, from further still, comes the liquid murmur of a torrent borne on the soft summer breeze. A faint hum of bees is heard, and a few birds twitter in the branches, while now and then a swallow skims noiselessly past, or a

butterfly alights on a neighbouring flower. Probably from the selected spot some grand mountain can be seen, and the idler is at first content to watch lazily the constant alternations of light and shade cast on it by the sky above, or to gaze at the fleecy clouds as they float lightly from peak to peak; but by degrees the mind, which has done no hard work like the body, begins to recover its activity, and away go the thoughts hither and thither over the scenes around.

There is a strange fascination about the Alps, whether we consider merely the beauty of their outward forms, or ponder with still greater admiration over their wondrous history, and their widespread usefulness. Dating for their origin to ages in the far past, separated from us by such immeasurable distances, that the mind can with difficulty reach back to them, these giants of the earth have been slowly moulded by outward causes, through years that must be counted by thousands, till they have been at last made fit for the presence, the habitation, and the enjoyment of man. We are apt at times to admire them for their beauty, without sufficiently appreciating the numberless benefits which they daily confer on the human race.

They and other chains like them are the great parents of those streams and rivers that give fertility to the ground and clothe it with verdure and vegetation. They gather round their lofty

brows the hot, rarefied air of the plains, and condense it into clouds, whence they draw the rain drop and the storm shower, the hailstone and the snowflake. They press the snow into ice, they cover the ice again with snow, and from the heart of their great frozen seas, they pour down countless streams, that gladden the valleys, that feed the lakes, and joining their scattered forces, sweep through the lowland districts carrying the commerce of cities and countries to the distant ports of the sea.

This same process which gives to the mountain ranges their inexhaustible water-supply, has served equally to clear the atmosphere, to purify the air, and to improve the climate of the countries around, so that by a beautiful arrangement, the super-abundant moisture rises from the heated plains to the cool heights above, whence it flows back again laden with blessings, to fertilise and adorn the earth.

If the Alps can extend their benefits to countries and to people so far distant from them, what can they not do for those at home! The peasant who dwells at their feet owes his subsistence entirely to them. They give him grass to feed his cows, fuel to light his fire, timber to build his house, meat to stock his larder, and last but not least, foreign tourists to fill his purse. Every thriving town, every monster hotel, every successful shop of Switzerland or Savoy, owes its prosperity, if not its very exist-

ence, to that crowd of strangers which the wonders of their mountain scenery yearly attracts to these countries, and the gold of Europe and America flows freely for four months out of every twelve into the outstretched hands and capacious pockets of the inhabitants.

The tourists, however, who return home with empty purses at the end of the autumn season, need not on this account consider themselves aggrieved; in almost all cases they have not parted with their money for nothing, but have got the full value of it in some form or other. The sick man carries his wasted frame to the Alps, gains health from their healing springs, and inhales strength with their bracing air. At any rate he has no right to grumble at the exchange he has made. Who among us would not willingly part with our gold to purchase the inestimable blessing of health?

It is true he may object that mineral waters and fresh air are the gifts of Heaven, and should not be sold by men, but he requires a good deal more for his cure besides air and water. He cannot pic-nic on the mountain side through the entire summer, nor like some hermit of old live in a cave on roots and fruit. No, he must have his comforts and luxuries just as he would at home, and so he has. But these comforts and luxuries neither grow nor are manufactured some 6,000 or 7,000 feet above the plain, and they have had to be dragged up many a

weary mile on the back of a beast of burden, or on the shoulders of a man; therefore, when the hotel-keeper has procured them with trouble and expense, and produces them for the entertainment of his visitors, it is scarcely fair of these latter to expect that he will not charge very much more for articles brought from such a distance, than had he only been obliged to send for them to a shop round the corner, or to the market a few streets off. Of course they will appear in the bill at prices much above their intrinsic value, though they can be got cheap enough in the nearest town; but of what use are they there to the hungry tourist on the mountain? They must be brought up to him, and he must pay for the operation.

Again, the very hotels to which we all flock during the hot months of the summer have been often built and furnished at great cost in these remote places; perhaps every bed and table and chair has had to be conveyed up for miles, over ground where there is not even the convenience of a *char* road, and for nearly nine months of the year these lofty habitations are empty and deserted, and all the money spent on them lies idle meanwhile, and brings in no interest. Anyone who will take the trouble to reflect for a moment on this subject cannot wonder much at the charges that at first sight appear so exorbitant. It seems to me that in general the prices at these little mountain inns are more reasonable in propor-

tion, considering all the difficulties that their owners have to contend with, than those asked at the large fashionable hotels in towns where all the requisites are close at hand.

It is no doubt irritating to be charged higher for a room because there happens to be a fine view from the window, but after all we pay for many other things which give us far less pleasure, and we all give our money cheerfully at the door of a picture-gallery or exhibition, where we perhaps do not see anything half so beautiful as that grand painting of nature that is sometimes framed in the window of a little Alpine inn.

I have spoken of the sick as in a pre-eminent degree indebted to the Alps, yet they represent after all but a small proportion of that great mass of human beings who rush for the summer to the highlands of Europe and return at its close, each with some good gift in his hand. The overworked clergyman, toiling for long months in his crowded parish, and saddened by the poverty, the sufferings, and the sins of his flock; the lawyer, weary with his task of proving and defending crime; the man of business, tired of his ledger and his desk; the judge, the M.P., the doctor, and many more of the brain-workers of the world, cast aside their surplices, their wigs, their account-books, or whatever the emblems of their office may be, and fly far from the noise of the city and the thoroughfare to quiet nooks and rural

valleys, where they find rest and relaxation; and, whatever are their various tastes, the mountains can satisfy them all.

To the geologist they are a mine of knowledge, as he goes forth among them, and reads in their stony records the wonderful history of the past. The botanist may wander to his heart's content for hours and days through their green labyrinths, and affix long imposing names to simple little flowers, till we can scarcely recognise our old friends under their grand Latin appellations.

The sportsman may take his rifle, and, clambering to the haunts of the fleet-footed chamois, shoot him—if he can. Of the climbers I have said enough already, and need only add that these all-accommodating mountains can give constant employment to the five Alpine clubs of Europe all through the long summer days, providing their members with an unlimited assortment of expeditions, safe or the reverse, according to their choice. For ordinary walkers they have ordinary walks, and there are good mules and strong porters for the people who will not walk at all.

To the man of science, what a resource the Alps have been! That one much-disputed question of glacier motion and its causes has given occupation for years to some of the wisest heads and cleverest brains of our own and other countries, and these men have watched, and experimented, and thought

with wonderful perseverance over the perplexed subject, and have braved cold, and winter, and night on the ice, and have formed great theories, and made great discoveries, and written deeply interesting books, full of opposing arguments, all so apparently unanswerable, that we, the ignorant ones, after carefully reading both sides of the question, are left very little wiser than we were before, and some of us—I only allude to myself—have come at last to the despicable state of always agreeing entirely with the last speaker.

Mountains are to the artists a never-ending source of pleasure and profit, and these lords of the pencil and the brush have brought their art to such perfection, that they can reproduce on paper or canvass the scenes which they behold, with a degree of fidelity and vividness which almost startles us, and performing, for the benefit of the public, that miracle which Mahomet, prophet as he was, could not perform for himself, they make the mountains come to us, so that in the winter we need not trouble ourselves to take long journeys, but have only to turn in a few doors off from the noise and din of Regent Street, and find ourselves on the top of Mont Blanc, or at the foot of its noblest ice fall, or else mounting no higher than a flight of stairs above Piccadilly, wander at our pleasure amid bold rocks, misty valleys, or snow-decked pines, whilst in the far distance the white clouds open, and clear

against the deep blue skies rise the familiar forms of many of our favourite peaks.

In speaking of those countries in which the great Alpine chains lie, it is impossible to pass over in silence the various races who inhabit them, and who, separated from each other often by mere imaginary boundaries, yet differ so much in their persons, their customs, their manners, and their characters. It is too wide a subject to be more than superficially touched upon in a small book like this, but properly treated by those who understand it in all its bearings, it could be made full of interest to the reader.

Clinging to the base of the great mountains or nestling in their valleys are five distinct peoples, the Swiss, the Italians, the Savoyards, the French, and the Austrians, curiously scattered among and dovetailed into each other, yet speaking different languages and following distinct customs. Even to the casual observer the dissimilarity between them is obvious, and the change from one country to another becomes immediately perceptible. The tourist, however, whose time is spent principally in moving from place to place, and who remains but a short time in each, has little opportunity of forming a right judgment on the character of the people in whose land he travels, and an opinion therefore from such a source must be given and received with diffidence. The class with whom, if a pedestrian, he will be thrown principally in contact, that of guides, will

not be a good criterion by which to decide; many of these latter being picked men, who from constantly associating with gentlemen of other countries, have rubbed off some of their national prejudices and peculiarities, and are more enlightened and better educated than the generality of the peasantry; yet even in them it is possible to trace very strongly the difference of race and nation.

The peasants of the Swiss valleys are apparently sturdy, independent, truthful, thrifty, mercenary, and very industrious. Their manners are as a rule unprepossessing, and it requires some time to get over the first disagreeable impression they produce, and to see through the rough surface the kindly feeling which often underlies it.

The peasants of the Italian valleys are the very opposite; lively, intelligent, idle, good-humoured, untruthful, and very friendly, their manners are so pleasant that the stranger feels drawn towards them at once, and likes them without exactly knowing why.

If you ask a Swiss man to show you the way or to oblige you in any other manner, he will do so conscientiously and to the best of his ability, but he will make you feel that he is putting himself out of his way to serve you. If you ask the same favour of an Italian, he will grant it with alacrity, and you will see at once that it gives him pleasure to help you, and yet almost against your inclination,

you will depend more on the word of the gruff Swiss peasant than on the assertions of his more courteous neighbour. It is impossible not to respect the Swiss most, and yet not to have a preference for the Italians.

In appearance the two races differ essentially, particularly the women. Those of Switzerland are generally strong and active-looking; very tidy in their persons, comfortably dressed, but often hard-featured and ugly. The women of the Italian valleys are on the contrary almost always pretty, and their costumes are very becoming and picturesque; but this last attribute, so important in the eyes of the painter, seldom exists along with neatness, and in their case the latter grace has certainly been completely sacrificed to the former.

The contrast in the management of small inns north and south of the Alps is very striking, and in this respect the Swiss host has very much the advantage of his southern brother. His establishment is always scrupulously clean, and though the food may at times be rough, yet at least there the unexpected traveller runs no danger of starvation. Not so on the other side, where it is quite possible to rise from an ambiguous meal to which no name can be given very little better than before sitting down to it. It is disheartening when arriving at a journey's end with an appetite sharpened by air and exercise, to find as we once did, that the

only available part of the *menu* consisted of potatoes and honey, or as on another occasion to be informed that the larder of the hotel was represented by one live chicken.

The Savoyards have more resemblance to the Italians than to the Swiss, but they struck us as being inferior to both these nations. They are not so polite as the former, nor so industrious and energetic as the latter, and some of their mountain inns are very rough and uncomfortable. Of course I do not include Chamonix in this category, which place with its imposing hotels, its gay shops, and its lively population is fast becoming French in appearance and character.

The question of Chamonix guides is one that has been latterly so much discussed that it would be mere repetition to do more than allude to it; our opportunities of judging their capacities were of course comparatively small, but as far as our experience went, we liked those whom we employed in that locality much less than the guides of the Oberland or the Valais.

Of the inhabitants of the French valleys I can say nothing, never having visited the Dauphiné Alps, where the accommodation is said to be very defective, so that it remains now to consider the Austrians of the Tirolese and Carinthian districts. As we only spent about a fortnight among a few of these valleys, and are still unacquainted with the largest

proportion of them, it is perhaps scarcely fair to pass any judgment on the peasantry, except in regard to their manners, and in this respect they did not impress us so favourably as we had expected, from the flattering descriptions we had read and heard of them. It appeared to us that they rather overdid their expressions of hospitality, and made demonstrations of an amount of friendliness which they could not possibly feel for absolute strangers, and which must therefore have been assumed for the occasion.

They welcome you on your arrival as if you were their oldest friend, whereas they have never seen you before in their lives, and do not care if they never see you again, and it is difficult while trying to respond to these amiabilities to keep down the uncharitable thought that it is to the 'beaux yeux de votre cassette' that they are paying their addresses. Then the ceremony of leave-taking at an inn where you have perhaps only spent one night is quite overpowering. By the time you have shaken hands with the master, the mistress, the housemaid, the waitress, the laundress, the man who brings out the horse, the man who drives, and any other official who happens to be present, you sink back into your vehicle quite fatigued with all these adieus, and the conviction grows stronger on your mind—or at least on mine—of how much pleasanter is the custom in Italy, where the host will take off his hat with easy

grace and wish you a '*buon viaggio*,' or even in Switzerland, where he will see that you have all your belongings safe around you, and then composedly take his leave. From all accounts I have no doubt that the Tirolese have many sterling good qualities, which on further acquaintance are observed and appreciated, and which our intercourse with them was too transitory to bring to light, and after all we saw but a very small portion of this people, and perhaps not the most favourable specimens.

Finally, as to the Carinthians we know, if anything, still less. Those with whom we came in contact were either very civil and pleasant to us or quite the reverse, as the case might be, and we were not long enough among them to be able to decide which phase of conduct was the general rule and which the exception.

In speaking in this chapter of all the inhabitants of and visitors to the Alpine regions, there is but one class which I have omitted to mention—that to which I belong myself. What am I to say of us ladies whose lot has fallen in pleasant places, who have neither to toil with our hands nor our heads to win our daily bread? As we have none of the hard work I fear in strict justice we should have none of the play, but fortunately for the human race justice alone is not the portion meted out to them, and they receive numberless blessings which they have neither

earned nor deserved, and so we go along with others for our holiday and are happy too.

Only let us hope that we get profit as well as pleasure from the mountain scenes to which we go, that we move among those wonderful works of God with our eyes open to read the lessons which they teach, and that though they have 'neither speech nor language' we yet hear their voices around, and catch with our listening ears some strains of the grand chorus of their ever-ascending hymn of praise.

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